

Official Report of the  
One Hundred Sixty-seventh  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**April 5 and 6, 1997**



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# Report of the 167th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 167th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 5, 1997, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 5 and 6, 1997. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 5, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the conference was carried by satellite transmission to more than 1,000 stake centers. The priesthood session was carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately 900 locations in many countries.

## General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

*The First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*The Quorum of the Twelve:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*The Presidency of the Seventy:* L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, W. Eugene Hansen, Jack H. Goasland, Harold G. Hillam, and Earl C. Tingey

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:*<sup>1</sup> Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Dallas N. Archibald, Ben B. Banks, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Wm. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, John M. Madsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Andrew W. Peterson, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Carl B. Pratt, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., David E. Sorensen, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Robert E. Wells, and W. Craig Zwick

*The Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Richard D. Allred, Lino Alvarez, L. Edward Brown, C. Max Caldwell, Eran A. Call, Sheldon F. Child, Quentin L. Cook, Richard E. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, John E. Fowler, Duane B. Gerrard, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, W. Don Ladd, Augusto A. Lim, James O. Mason, Richard J. Maynes, V. Dallas Merrell, Dale E. Miller, Bruce D. Porter, Lynn G. Robbins, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, F. David

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<sup>1</sup>Elder James M. Paramore was excused due to illness.

Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Jerald L. Taylor, Richard E. Turley Sr., Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and Richard B. Wirthlin

*The Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

### Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 167th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 5, 1997, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "They, the Builders of the Nation." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 167th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We greet all of you who are participating in the Tabernacle; and in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders M. Russell Ballard, Vaughn J. Featherstone, and Francisco J. Viñas are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Dean

L. Larsen, John H. Groberg, Marlin K. Jensen, and Ben B. Banks are in attendance.

All of the General Authorities are in attendance except Elder James M. Paramore, who is ill.

We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, seated on the stand.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present this morning.

The music for this session will be given by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

The chorus opened by singing "They, the Builders of the Nation" and will now favor us with "Faith of Our Fathers." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy.

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The chorus sang "Faith of Our Fathers."

Elder Cree-L Kofford offered the invocation.

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## President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, if I may make a few preliminary remarks. We welcome you wherever you may be throughout the world. With much of love we greet you. This is both a general conference and a world conference. One hundred sixty-seven years have passed since the Church was organized. From that day until this it has steadily and consistently grown until at the end of 1996, the membership reached nearly 9,700,000. We have become a great concourse of people. We should reach the 10 million mark by the end of this year.

In these opening remarks, I intend to briefly mention three or four matters that I hope will be of interest to each of you.

### **New assembly building**

For those far afield, I may say that we are speaking from the historic Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. We hope to break ground on July 24 for a new place of assembly which we have not yet named, where, at least for many years to come, all who desire to attend the general conference may do so. It will be constructed on the block directly north of Temple Square. It will seat up to four times as many as the Tabernacle.

It will be used for general conference and for other purposes that are in harmony with the reasons for which it is being built. The stage will be such that it can accommodate a large pageant. We may not fill it initially, but we are building for the long term.

This remarkable Tabernacle has served us well and will continue to do so. The Tabernacle Choir broadcasts will continue from here, and many meetings will be held here. This building has remarkable properties, different from other structures. It is unique and wonderful. However, there are today re-

gional conferences involving only six or seven stakes where we have many more people than the Tabernacle will accommodate.

### **New temples**

Now as we speak of construction projects, we remind you that we are moving forward with the building of new temples. On June 1-5 the St. Louis Missouri Temple will be dedicated. This fall the temple in Vernal, Utah, will be dedicated.

Work is on schedule in Preston, England; Bogotá, Colombia; Guayaquil, Ecuador; Cochabamba, Bolivia; Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Recife, Brazil; and Madrid, Spain. The approval process is moving forward in Boston, Massachusetts. While delayed, planning for a temple in Nashville, Tennessee, continues. Preliminary work is under way in Billings, Montana, and White Plains, New York, as well as Monterrey, Mexico. The search for a suitable property continues in Venezuela. We are pleased to announce today that ground has been acquired in Albuquerque, New Mexico, for the construction of a temple and also in Campinas, Brazil, where the need is great. Other sites are under consideration. I hope to see temples so located that members of the Church can travel to one of these sacred houses within a reasonable distance of their homes.

Though I live with it, this matter of temple construction is a thing of awesome wonder to me. We are trying to build in such a way and in such places across the world that these houses of the Lord may stand and serve through the Millennium.

### **General Relief Society presidency**

The next item: the general Relief Society presidency will be released at

Saturday, April 5, 1997

Morning Session

this conference. These women have done a great and significant work. They have served for more than eight years, giving unselfishly of their time and their rich talents. They have given remarkable leadership to the women of the Church and also have participated on other boards and committees of which they have been members. We are deeply grateful to them. Formal action on this matter will be taken when President Monson presents the General Authorities and general officers of the Church immediately after my remarks.

### **New Quorums of Seventy**

I come now to the Brethren of the Seventy. As you know, we have two Quorums of Seventy who serve as General Authorities with jurisdiction across the Church. The First is comprised of those who serve to age 70. We will sustain four Brethren in this quorum this morning. Additionally, we are calling a group of wise and mature men with long experience in the Church and with freedom to go wherever circumstances dictate as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. These Brethren will serve for periods of from three to five years. In every sense they will be General Authorities.

We also have a faithful cadre of Brethren serving as Area Authorities. These have been called wherever the Church is organized. They are faithful and devoted men. They are men who love the Church and who have served in many capacities. As we have traveled at home and abroad, we have worked with many of them and have been deeply impressed with their remarkable capacity.

The Lord made provision at a general level for a First Presidency, a Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Quorums of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric. At a local level the revelations speak of stake presidents and bishops. We have had in between the general

and local authorities for a period of time the Regional Representatives—now more recently these Area Authorities. We have determined to present to the conference the names of these Area Authorities to be ordained Seventies. They will then have a quorum relationship presided over by the Presidents of the Seventy. They will be known as Area Authority Seventies, to serve for a period of years in a voluntary capacity in the area in which they reside. They are called by the First Presidency and will work under the general direction of the Quorum of the Twelve, the Presidents of the Seventy, and the Area Presidencies in that part of the world in which they live.

They will continue with their present employment, reside in their own homes, and serve on a Church-service basis. Those residing in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Pacific will become members of the Third Quorum of Seventy. Those in Mexico, Central America, and South America will become members of the Fourth Quorum. Those residing in the United States and Canada will become members of the Fifth Quorum.

They may be assigned to (a) preside at stake conferences and train stake presidencies, (b) create or reorganize stakes and set apart stake presidencies, (c) serve as counselors in Area Presidencies, (d) chair regional conference planning committees, (e) serve on area councils presided over by the Area Presidency, (f) tour missions and train mission presidents, and (g) complete other duties as assigned.

Consistent with their ordination as Seventies, they become officers of the Church with a specific and definite tie to a quorum. While there will be only limited opportunities for them to come together in quorum meetings, the Presidents of the Seventy will communicate with them, will instruct them, receive reports, and do other things of that kind. They will now have a sense of belonging



that they have not experienced up to this time. As Seventies they are called to preach the gospel and to be especial witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the revelations. Though all Seventies have equal scriptural authority, members of the First and Second Quorums are designated General Authorities, while members of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth are designated Area Authorities.

Although the ordination to the office of Seventy is without term, a Seventy is called to serve in a quorum for a designated period of years. At the conclusion of this service, he will return to activity in his respective ward and stake and will meet with his high priests group.

We welcome most warmly these Brethren into quorum membership and activity. They have our confidence, our love, and our esteem.

With these respective quorums in place, we have established a pattern under which the Church may grow to any size with an organization of Area Presidencies and Area Authority Seventies, chosen and working across the world according to need.

Now, the Lord is watching over His kingdom. He is inspiring its leadership to care for its ever growing membership. Immediately following my remarks, President Monson will present the Gen-

eral Authorities, the Area Authorities, and the general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote. I need not remind you that this is a very sacred and important matter.

### **A wonderful season of the Lord's work**

We are living in a wonderful season of the work of the Lord. The work is growing ever stronger. It is expanding across the world. Each of us has an important part to play in this great undertaking. People in more than 160 nations, speaking a score of languages and more, worship our Father in Heaven and our Redeemer, His Beloved Son. This is their great work. It is their cause and their kingdom.

May I, in closing, repeat the words of Jacob: "But behold, I, Jacob, would speak unto you that are pure in heart. Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith, and he will console you in your afflictions, and he will plead your cause, and send down justice upon those who seek your destruction" (Jacob 3:1).

May we be faithful and true, doing our duty to move forward the eternal work of the Lord, blessing our Father's children wherever we can touch their lives, is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers**

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authorities, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of

the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Gary J. Coleman, John M. Madsen, Wm. Rolfe Kerr, and Carl B. Pratt as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Richard D. Allred, Eran A. Call, Richard E. Cook, Duane B. Gerrard, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, Richard J. Maynes, Dale E. Miller, Lynn G. Robbins, Donald L. Staheli, and Richard E. Turley Sr. as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the 134 Area Authorities, who are present with us today, as Seventies of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to act in the office of Area Authority Seventies. These brethren are:

Oscar H. Aguayo  
 Carlos E. Agüero  
 Julio E. Alvarado  
 Paulo C. F. Amorím  
 Adolfo Ávalos  
 Carl W. Bacon  
 Lowell C. Barber  
 David A. Bednar  
 Blair S. Bennett  
 Robert K. Bills  
 Bruce B. Bingham

O. Brent Black  
 Norman C. Boehm  
 Harold C. Brown  
 Donald J. Butler  
 René J. Cabrera  
 Douglas L. Callister  
 Antonio Cappel  
 Raimondo Castellani  
 Hugo A. Catrón  
 Victor D. Cave  
 Chu-Jen Chia  
 V. Francisco Chinchay  
 Jess L. Christensen  
 Kay H. Christensen  
 Christopher N. Chukwurah  
 L. Whitney Clayton  
 Ambrosio C. Collado  
 Gordon G. Conger  
 Max W. Craner  
 Cláudio Cuellar  
 César A. Dávila  
 Jorge L. del Castillo  
 Cleto P. De Oliveira  
 Adelson de Paula Parrella  
 Paul L. Diehl  
 Lindsay T. Dil  
 Donald B. Doty  
 Dale L. Dransfield  
 Alvie R. Evans Sr.  
 Enrique R. Falabella  
 David W. Ferrel  
 Lawrence R. Fuller  
 Armando Gaona  
 Ruben G. Gapiz  
 Harvey L. Gardner  
 Daryl H. Garn  
 Eduardo Gavarret  
 Silvio Geschwandtner  
 Larry W. Gibbons  
 Francisco G. Giménez  
 Christoffel Golden Jr.  
 Walter F. González  
 Paulo R. Grahl  
 James E. Griffin  
 C. Scott Grow  
 Esteban Guevara  
 Mario E. Guzmán  
 Donald L. Hallstrom  
 Ronald T. Halverson

Ronald J. Hammond  
 John A. Harris  
 Keith K. Hilbig  
 Thomas A. Holt  
 Pita F. Hopoate  
 Clayton S. Huber  
 Jon M. Huntsman Sr.  
 Ernst Husz  
 Salomón Jaar  
 Julio H. Jaramillo  
 Lloyd W. Jones  
 Hitoshi Kashikura  
 Seiji Katanuma  
 Chong-Youl Kim  
 Richard K. Klein  
 Won Yong Ko  
 Brent H. Koyle  
 Eduardo A. Lamartine  
 James G. Larkin  
 Shih-An Liang  
 David López  
 J. Willard Marriott Jr.  
 João R. C. Martins Silva  
 Gary Matsuda  
 John Maxwell  
 W. E. Barry Mayo  
 Hyde M. Merrill  
 César A. S. Milder  
 P. Bruce Mitchell  
 J. Michael Moeller  
 J. Kirk Moyes  
 Mitchell V. Myers  
 Karl E. Nelson  
 Rodrigo Obeso  
 James S. Olson  
 Julio E. Otay  
 Glen A. Overton  
 William W. Parmley  
 Wolfgang H. Paul  
 Stein Pedersen  
 Jorge A. Pedrero  
 E. Israel Pérez  
 Wayne S. Peterson  
 Alain A. Petion  
 Steven H. Pond  
 R. Gordon Porter  
 Holger D. Rakow  
 Gustavo Ramos  
 Eugene F. E. W. Reid

Michael T. Robinson  
 Alejandro M. Robles  
 Servando Rojas  
 Lynn A. Rosenvall  
 Claudio D. Signorelli  
 Keith L. Smith  
 R. Lloyd Smith  
 L. Douglas Smoot  
 Irajá B. Soares  
 Su Kiong Tan  
 Ernani Teixeira  
 José A. Teixeira da Silva  
 Octaviano Tenorio  
 D. Lee Tobler  
 Juan Uceda  
 Tomás Valdés  
 Carlos D. Vargas  
 Jorge W. Ventura  
 Hector M. Verdugo  
 Remus G. Villarete  
 Craig T. Vincent  
 Brian A. Watling  
 Robert S. Wood  
 Jorge F. Zeballos  
 Claudio D. Zivic

Those in favor may manifest it.

Those opposed may also manifest it.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks and sincere appreciation Sisters Elaine L. Jack, Chieko N. Okazaki, and Aileen H. Clyde as the Relief Society general presidency. We also release all members of the Relief Society General Board.

It is also proposed that we release as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency Sister Bonnie D. Parkin. Sister Parkin has accepted a call to serve with her husband as he presides over the England London South Mission.

All who wish to join in an expression of profound appreciation for the excellent service of these sisters may do so.

It is proposed that we sustain Sister Mary Ellen Wood Smoot as the new general president of the Relief Society, with Sister Virginia Urry Jensen as first counselor and Sister Sheri L. Dew as

second counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may so signify.

It is proposed that we sustain Sister Carol Ann Burdett Thomas as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency. All in favor, please signify. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative.

### **President Hinckley**

Thank you, President Monson. I think he made a pretty good effort at pronouncing those names. I'm not sure he got them all right, but he tried! I want to say further that Sister Sheri Dew's call to the Relief Society presidency isn't a thank-you for writing my biography. She was nominated by Sister Smoot and not by me, although I greatly appreciate what she's done. She's left me without privacy or anything else.

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Council of the Twelve, will now speak to us.

## **President Boyd K. Packer**

### **Study of doctrines improves behavior**

My message is to our young people. We have great concern for young people who grow up without values on which to base their conduct. I have long believed that the study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than talking about behavior will improve behavior.

The study of behavior is greatly improved when linked to standards and to values. Practical values, useful in everyday life, are found in the scriptures and the doctrines they reveal. I will give you one example: "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."<sup>1</sup>

You should learn while you are young that while the Atonement of Christ applies to humanity in general, the influence of it is individual, very personal, and very useful. Even to you beginners, an understanding of the Atonement is of immediate and very practical value in everyday life.

### **Untidy soldiers in World War II**

More than 50 years ago during World War II, I had an experience. Our

bomber crew had been trained at Langley Field, Virginia, to use the latest invention—radar. We were ordered to the West Coast and then on to the Pacific.

We were transported on a freight train with boxcars fitted with narrow bedsprings that could be pulled down from the wall at night. There were no dining cars. Instead, camp kitchens were set up in boxcars with dirt floors.

We were dressed in light-colored summer uniforms. The baggage car got sidetracked, so we had no change of clothing during the six-day trip. It was very hot crossing Texas and Arizona. Smoke and cinders from the engine made it very uncomfortable. There was no way to bathe or wash our uniforms. We rolled into Los Angeles one morning—a grubby-looking outfit—and were told to return to the train that evening.

We thought first of food. The 10 of us in our crew pooled our money and headed for the best restaurant we could find.

It was crowded, and so we joined a long line waiting to be seated. I was first, just behind some well-dressed women. Even without turning around, the stately woman in front of me soon became aware that we were there.

She turned and looked at us. Then she turned and looked me over from head to toe. There I stood in that sweaty, dirty, sooty, wrinkled uniform. She said in a tone of disgust, "My, what untidy men!" All eyes turned to us.

No doubt she wished we were not there; I shared her wish. I felt as dirty as I was, uncomfortable, and ashamed.

### **The shame of being spiritually unclean**

Later, when I began a serious study of the scriptures, I noticed references to being spiritually clean. One verse says, "Ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell."<sup>2</sup>

I could understand that. I remembered how I felt that day in Los Angeles. I reasoned that to be spiritually unclean would bring shame and humiliation immeasurably more intense than I felt then. I found references—there are at least eight of them—which say that no unclean thing can enter the presence of God.<sup>3</sup> While I realized those references had little to do with dirty clothes or soiled hands, I decided I wanted to stay spiritually clean.

Incidentally, that day we went canoeing in Griffith Park. We were horsing around and, of course, tipped over. We got to shore all right, and in due time the sun dried us out. By the time we returned to the train, we were really quite presentable.

I learned that when I didn't live as I ought to, getting myself spiritually clean was not as easy as taking a shower or putting on clean clothing or falling out of a canoe.

### **Repentance can cleanse us**

I learned about the great plan of happiness, that we are on earth to be

tested. We will all make mistakes. The Apostle John taught, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Fortunately he added, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."<sup>4</sup> I paid particular attention to that word *cleanse*.

I thought that repentance, like soap, should be used frequently. I found that when I apologized for mistakes, things were better. But for serious mistakes, an apology was not enough—sometimes not even possible. While these mistakes were, for the most part, not major ones, the spiritual pain called *guilt* invariably set in. Sooner or later they must be resolved, but I didn't know what to do. That happens when you break something that you alone can't fix.

### **Wickedness never was happiness**

Among you young people are those who are "vexed," as Peter said, "with the filthy conversation of the wicked."<sup>5</sup> Some of you joke about standards and see no need to change behavior. You tell yourselves it doesn't matter because everybody's doing it.

But that doesn't work because you, by nature, are good. How many times have you heard someone say, after doing some generous or heroic deed or simply helping others, how *good* it made them feel? Like any natural feeling or emotion, that reaction is inborn in you. Surely you have experienced that yourself! Happiness is inseparably connected with decent, clean behavior.

The prophet Alma bluntly told his wayward son that because he transgressed he was "in a state contrary to the nature of happiness"<sup>6</sup> and that "wickedness never was happiness."<sup>7</sup> Those who don't know how to erase mistakes often feel cornered and rebellious and lose themselves in unworthy living. If you

travel with transgressors, you will suffer much more than I did in that restaurant.

### Through the Atonement we can repent

Most mistakes you can repair yourself, alone, through prayerful repentance. The more serious ones require help. Without help, you are like one who can't or doesn't wash or bathe or put on clean clothes. The path you need to follow is in the scriptures. Read them and your faith in Christ will grow. Listen to those who know the gospel.

You will learn about the Fall of man, about the purpose of life, about good and evil, about temptations and repentance, about how the Spirit works. Read what Alma said of his repentance: "I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more."<sup>8</sup>

Hear the Lord say, "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."<sup>9</sup> Doctrine *can* change behavior quicker than talking about behavior will.

It was through reading the scriptures, and listening, that I could understand, at least in part, the power of the Atonement. Can you imagine how I felt when finally I could see that if I followed whatever conditions the Redeemer had set, I need never endure the agony of being spiritually unclean? Imagine the consoling, liberating, exalting feeling that will come to you when you see the reality of the Atonement and the practical everyday value of it to you individually.

You need not know everything before the power of the Atonement will work for you. Have faith in Christ; it begins to work the day you ask! The scripture speaks of "obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."<sup>10</sup> We all pretty well know what it means to obey laws. But how are we to obey ordinances?

Generally we understand that, conditioned upon repentance, the ordinance of

baptism washes our sins away. Some wonder if they were baptized too soon. If only they could be baptized now and have a clean start. But that is not necessary! Through the ordinance of the sacrament, you renew the covenants made at baptism. When you meet all of the conditions of repentance, however difficult, you may be forgiven and your transgressions will trouble your mind no more.

### Like Joseph F. Smith, we can be clean

President Joseph F. Smith was six years old when his father, Hyrum, was killed in Carthage Jail. Joseph crossed the plains with his widowed mother. At age 15 he was called on a mission to Hawaii. He felt lost and alone and said: "I was very much oppressed. . . . I was almost naked and entirely friendless, except the friendship of a poor, benighted . . . people. I felt as if I was so debased in my condition of poverty, lack of intelligence and knowledge, just a boy, that I hardly dared look [anyone] in the face."

While pondering his plight, the young elder had a dream, "a literal thing; . . . a reality." He dreamed he was on a journey rushing as fast as he possibly could.

He carried a small bundle. Finally he came to a wonderful mansion, his destination. As he approached, he saw a notice, "Bath." He turned aside quickly, went in, and washed himself clean. He opened his little bundle and found clean, white clothing—"a thing," he said, "I had not seen for a long time." He put them on and rushed to the door of the mansion.

"I knocked," he said, "and the door opened, and the man who stood there was the Prophet Joseph Smith. He looked at me a little reprovingly, and the first words he said [were]: 'Joseph, you are late.' . . . I took confidence and said: 'Yes, but I am clean—I am clean!'"<sup>11</sup> And so it can be with you.

### Poetic expression of testimony

I say to you again that a knowledge of the principles and doctrines of the gospel will affect your behavior more than talking about behavior.

I have used the Atonement as one of many examples. In the gospel of Jesus Christ are values on which to build a happy life.

I give you my testimony that our Father in Heaven lives. The Atonement of Christ can bless your life. If only I could tell you what the Atonement means to me. I once tried to express it in writing and close with these lines:

In ancient times the cry "Unclean!"  
Would warn of lepers near.  
"Unclean! Unclean!" the words rang  
out;

Then all drew back in fear,

Lest by the touch of lepers' hands

They, too, would lepers be.

There was no cure in ancient times,

Just hopeless agony.

No soap, no balm, no medicine

Could stay disease or pain.

There was no salve, no cleansing bath,

To make them well again.

But there was One, the record shows,

Whose touch could make them pure;

Could ease their awful suffering,

Their rotting flesh restore.

His coming long had been foretold.

Signs would precede His birth.

A Son of God to woman born,

With power to cleanse the earth.

The day He made ten lepers whole,

The day He made them clean,

Well symbolized His ministry

And what His life would mean.

However great that miracle,

This was not why He came.

He came to rescue every soul

From death, from sin, from shame.

For greater miracles, He said,

His servants yet would do,

To rescue every living soul,

Not just heal up the few.

Though we're redeemed from mortal  
death,

We still can't enter in

Unless we're clean, cleansed every  
whit,

From every mortal sin.

What must be done to make us clean

We cannot do alone.

The law, to be a law, requires

A pure one must atone.

He taught that justice will be stayed

Till mercy's claim be heard

If we repent and are baptized

And live by every word. . . .

If we could only understand

All we have heard and seen,

We'd know there is no greater gift

Than those two words—"Washed  
clean!"<sup>12</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:3.
2. Mormon 9:4.
3. See 1 Nephi 10:21; 15:34; Alma 7:21; 11:37; 40:26; 3 Nephi 27:19; Doctrine and Covenants 94:9; Moses 6:57.
4. 1 John 1:8-9.
5. 2 Peter 2:7.
6. Alma 41:11.
7. Alma 41:10.
8. Alma 36:19.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42; see also Hebrews 8:12; 10:17.
10. Articles of Faith 1:3.
11. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 541-42.
12. Boyd K. Packer, "Washed Clean."

### President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer has just spoken to us.

We're pleased and delighted to have Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve with us this morning. The Lord has blessed him, immensely and

wonderfully. He will now address us, following which the choir and congregation will join in singing "Praise to the Man."

Sister Patricia P. Pinegar, Primary general president, will then speak to us.

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

### Appreciation for faith and prayers

My thanks to the First Presidency for this opportunity during which, as you can see, the lights combine with my cranium to bring some different "illumination" to this pulpit. As to my illness, treatments to date have proved encouraging, so I gladly express my deep gratitude for having come "thus far" (2 Nephi 31:19).

Brothers and sisters, if I have any entitlement to the blessings of God, it has long since been settled in the court of small claims by His generous bestowals over a lifetime.

I express special appreciation for the faith and prayers of a loving and nursing wife and family, the Brethren and their wives, my secretary, hundreds and hundreds of members and friends; and for caring and very competent doctors and nurses. Heavenly Father has surely responded to their meritorious prayers and efforts. These, your gifts, are already a spiritual spur to me. I truly feel unworthy, but I am not unappreciative. My love and thanks to all of you!

Something I have heard President Hinckley do many times publicly is to give all the glory, the praise, and the honor to God. This is something I am going to do more often, including today, incorporating my appreciation for God's tutoring and blessings.

### No immunity from trials

Uncertainty as to our longevity is one of life's basic realities for all of us. Hence, you and I should importune in faith for the blessings we deeply desire,

but then be "content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto [us]" (Alma 29:3). Clearly our individual exit routes from this life vary; so does the timing.

There are many who suffer so much more than the rest of us: some go agonizingly; some go quickly; some are healed; some are given more time; some seem to linger. There are variations in our trials but no immunities. Thus, the scriptures cite the fiery furnace and fiery trials (see Daniel 3:6–26; 1 Peter 4:12). Those who emerge successfully from their varied and fiery furnaces have experienced the grace of the Lord, which He says is sufficient (see Ether 12:27). Even so, brothers and sisters, such emerging individuals do not rush to line up in front of another fiery furnace in order to get an extra turn! However, since the mortal school is of such short duration, our tutoring Lord can be the Schoolmaster of the compressed curriculum.

### The greatest truth

The redeeming presence of our loving Father-God in the universe is the grand fact pertaining to the human condition. It is the supernal truth which, along with His plan of happiness, reigns preeminent and imperial over all other realities. Other truths, by comparison, are merely fleeting factoids about which we may be "ever learning" without coming to a knowledge of the grand truths (2 Timothy 3:7).

Mortal experience points evermore to the Atonement of Jesus Christ as the central act of all human history. The more I learn and experience, the more



unselfish, stunning, and encompassing His Atonement becomes!

### **The fellowship of Christ's sufferings**

When we take Jesus' yoke upon us, this admits us eventually to what Paul called the "fellowship of [Christ's] sufferings" (Philippians 3:10). Whether illness or aloneness, injustice or rejection, etc., our comparatively small-scale sufferings, if we are meek, will sink into the very marrow of the soul. We then better appreciate not only Jesus' sufferings for us, but also His matchless character, moving us to greater adoration and even emulation.

Alma revealed that Jesus knows how to succor us in the midst of our griefs and sicknesses precisely because Jesus has already borne our griefs and sicknesses (see Alma 7:11-12). He knows them firsthand; thus His empathy is earned. Of course, we do not comprehend it fully any more than we understand how He bore all mortal sins, but His Atonement remains the rescuing and reassuring reality.

### **We will praise Jesus' loving-kindness**

No wonder, of all the things for which we might praise Jesus when He comes again in majesty and power, we will praise Him for His "loving kindness" and His "goodness"; moreover, we will go on praising Him forever and ever! (D&C 133:52; see also Mosiah 4:6, 11;

Alma 7:23). We will never need to be coaxed.

Thus, ever acknowledging God's redeeming hand is very important, but, alas, so doing is diminished by the unwise mortal reliance on "the arm of flesh" (2 Nephi 4:34; D&C 1:19). Ah, the arrogant arm of flesh, like the quarterback whose arm was so strong it was boasted that he could throw a football through a car wash and it would come out dry on the other side! Such naïveté, such triviality symbolize not only the arm, but also the mind of flesh, which misses "things as they really are, and . . . things as they really will be" (Jacob 4:13).

### **Gratitude for the precious Comforter**

Finally, my humble praise today flows not only to God the Father for His loving plan of salvation and to Jesus, the Lord of the universe, for His marvelous and remarkable Atonement, but also to the Holy Ghost, about whom we speak less. Among His many roles I express my particular and personal gratitude today for the recent ways in which He has been the precious Comforter, including in the midnight moments!

In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang "Praise to the Man."

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## **Sister Patricia P. Pinegar**

### **Unite in caring for the souls of children**

The longer I serve in my calling as Primary president, the greater is my concern for children. Children are a sacred gift from a loving Heavenly Father. "Children are an heritage of the Lord"

(Psalm 127:3). The more I think about children, the more I worry about parents.

President Spencer W. Kimball said: "Our Heavenly Father placed the responsibility upon parents to see that their children are well fed, well groomed

and clothed, well trained, and well taught. Most parents protect their children with shelter—they tend and care for their diseases, provide clothes for their safety and their comfort, and supply food for their health and growth. But what do they do for their souls?" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 332).

I am afraid that some children may someday have the feelings expressed by the Psalmist: "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul" (Psalm 142:4).

Today I speak to all parents and every adult member of the Church and invite all to unite in caring for the souls of children.

### **Many dangers threaten our families**

Several years ago I was working in my garden and was delighted to see a family of quail. I watched the father sitting on top of the wall standing guard. The mother was busy keeping her 10 precious babies together and seemed to be demonstrating how to peck in the earth for food. I was fascinated. I carefully and quietly walked closer. All too soon I was detected by the watchful father, and he let out a warning call. The mother tried to guide the children around the wall to safety, but I—the danger—was too near, and she became frustrated and confused and flew up on the wall by the father. I didn't want to harm this family, so I quickly retreated out of sight.

Unlike my experience with the quail family, the dangers threatening the lives of our families do not retreat. Satan rejoices in our confusion and frustration, and his influences surround us. We turn on the television—is this a family show? We hear something coming out of our child's room—is this music? We try to pick a movie—did this one really have an acceptable rating?

Sometimes Satan's influences are more subtle. I have asked myself these questions: Do I leave my children exposed to danger when I don't teach them the truths of the gospel? Do I neglect their souls when I don't help them recognize the promptings of the Spirit and the guidance they can receive? Do I leave my children exposed to danger when my example is not the same as my words or when I don't share my love in such a way that each child feels it deeply?

### **Parenting is a godly responsibility**

Statistics and news reports tell us that there are children who have been tragically deserted. Happily, that is not the plight of all children. I have visited homes where love abounds, the gospel is taught, and children's souls are well cared for. I have witnessed single parents who are magnificent in their faith and dedication. I know single adults who are involving themselves in the lives of families and strengthening both the parents and the children. I know teachers and leaders and other caring adults who touch the lives of children and youth, who care for their souls.

The blessings of parenting and helping to care for children are many. President Hinckley said: "Of all the joys of life, none other equals that of happy parenthood. Of all the responsibilities with which we struggle, none other is so serious. To rear children in an atmosphere of love, security, and faith is the most rewarding of all challenges. The good result from such efforts becomes life's most satisfying compensation" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 74; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54).

Parenting is a godly responsibility necessary for the salvation of Father's children and important for our preparation for eternal blessings. Rejoice in your opportunities to love and care for the souls of children. Our Father has

blessings and eternal rewards available for each of His children, whether they are married or single, parents or childless. Our circumstances may be different, our opportunities may be varied, but the end result of our righteousness can be the same—eternal parenthood, eternal lives. Helping to care for the souls of children will help each of us prepare for this eternal blessing.

### **Follow the example of the Father and the Son**

What are some things that we can do to improve? I believe that seriously studying how our Father cares for His children can help us. Everything we know about our Heavenly Father is connected with His parenthood and His loving care for our souls. He loves each of His children unconditionally. We can do the same in our families. His plan of happiness is a plan to help His children progress and be prepared to receive His greatest blessings. We can make plans to help our families progress. He included His children in the great Heavenly Council and allowed us to participate and use our agency to choose. We can have family councils and include our children as active participants. Under His guidance, this earth was prepared as a place where we could learn and grow. Our homes can be happy places where our children can learn and grow. He has given His children rules of conduct and commandments that keep us moving forward, focused on the path that leads to our heavenly home. The rules of conduct in our family can help us move forward on the path back to our Heavenly Father.

The Only Begotten Son of our Father, our Savior Jesus Christ, spent His earthly ministry showing us how to love, bless, and teach all of the family of God. He taught us that not one soul should be lost. We should follow His example in loving and blessing our families and do-

ing all we can to see that not one soul is lost.

### **Receive blessings from temple attendance**

In preparation for this talk and in search of answers to how we can better care for each child, my husband, Ed, and I attended the temple. I was so grateful for that sacred opportunity, for in the temple we were reminded of promised blessings. I realized that the blessings offered in this sacred place provide help needed by every parent in raising children today.

Work toward being temple worthy, and obtain a temple recommend even if the temple is too far away to attend very often. Great blessings will come to you and your children because of your personal righteousness. If you now have a temple recommend, study and pray and attend the temple often to increase your understanding of the covenants you have made.

### **Receive inspiration from the Lord**

Each parent also needs to follow this counsel from President Hinckley: "You need more than your own wisdom in rearing [your children]. You need the help of the Lord. Pray for that help and follow the inspiration which you receive" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 120; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 89).

As we become more righteous by keeping our covenants and by more closely following the counsel in the scriptures and from our living prophets, we will truly be blessed with the daily guidance that we need from our Father and Savior to raise our children in righteousness.

To all fathers and mothers of the Church, tell your children that you love them and that you are so happy to have them in your family. Prepare yourselves spiritually to receive guidance through

the Holy Ghost. As you prayerfully study the scriptures and "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102), listen and respond to the promptings of the Spirit. Be aware of Satan's influences. Where do the feelings come from that make you feel that your efforts in the home are not fulfilling or important? Where do the feelings come from that make you feel unappreciated? Rejoice in this preparation for godhood. Rejoice in the opportunity to teach your children the truths of the kingdom, and help them experience the peace and joy that come from following these truths.

### **Young people should prepare**

May I say something to the young men and women of the Church. Look to parenthood; prepare and plan for it. Prepare to be worthy fathers and mothers. The thoughts of your future children can keep you in the right way. If this blessing isn't yours in this earth life, your preparation and desire will prepare you to love and nurture all of God's children as the Savior did. Your eternal reward can be an eternal family.

### **The prophet's counsel**

In a recent stake conference, our prophet counseled parents:

"Never forget that these little ones are the sons and daughters of God and that yours is a custodial relationship to them, that He was a parent before you were parents and that He has not relinquished His parental rights or interest in these . . . little ones. Now, love them, take care of them. Fathers, control your tempers, now and in all the years to come. Mothers, control your voices, keep them down. Rear your children in love, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Take care of your little ones, welcome them into your homes and nurture and love them with all of your hearts" (Gordon B. Hinckley, Salt Lake University Third Stake conference, 3 Nov. 1996; in *Church News*, 1 Mar. 1997, 2).

My prayer, my brothers and sisters, is that all of us will rejoice in the opportunities we have in caring for the souls of children, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Thank you, Sister Pinegar. Sister Patricia P. Pinegar, Primary general president, has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin**

We are all impressed with Elder Neal A. Maxwell's beautiful talk. I might add, he now joins the ranks of those, especially Brother Oaks and me, with illuminated heads. But most of all, we remember him for his wisdom, inspiration, and great leadership in the kingdom. What a miracle it is to have him here today. The Lord has blessed him and heard our prayers.

### **Great things are happening**

General conference is an inspiring time of the year for the entire membership of the Church. Our purpose is to "instruct and edify each other, that [we] may know how to . . . act upon the points of [God's] law and commandments."<sup>1</sup> I humbly pray that we may continue to have that same spirit with us that we have enjoyed so much during this morning's session.

In our day, great things are happening in the kingdom! The Church is moving forward throughout the world as never before. It is a privilege for us to witness in our lifetimes such exciting progress toward fulfillment of the great prophecy that "the kingdom . . . may become a great mountain and fill the whole earth!"<sup>12</sup>

Great things are happening because so many of you are faithfully "act[ing] upon the points of [God's] law and commandments." As leaders of the Lord's Church, we are thrilled to see so much good being done by many righteous and faithful Latter-day Saints. Please know that we pray often that our Heavenly Father will help you to be true to the covenants that you have made with Him.

### **"Walk the path of faith"**

In a recent message, President Gordon B. Hinckley issued both an invitation and a challenge: "I invite you," he said, "to walk the path of faith with me. I challenge you to stand for that which is right and true and good."<sup>13</sup> Our prophet exemplifies an unwavering commitment to and example of walking in this path of faith and diligence. In our everyday lives, are we following his inspired example? As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are we rising to his challenge "to stand for that which is right and true and good"? Echoing a favorite hymn, President Hinckley admonished, "Let us be [true,] 'true to the faith that our parents have cherished, *true to the truth* for which martyrs have perished.'"<sup>14</sup>

Brothers and sisters, are we "true to the truth"?

The thirteenth article of faith states that "we believe in being . . . true." The truth of the restored gospel, as this hymn highlights, is "the fairest gem, . . . the brightest prize / To which mortals or Gods can aspire. . . . Truth, the sum of existence, will weather the worst, / Eternal, unchanged, evermore."<sup>15</sup>

Yes, the fulness of the gospel is a pearl of great price worth any effort.

While we are taught to develop our talents and provide for our families, nevertheless we must be careful not to let the pursuit of our career path divert us from the gospel path.

We must be "true to the truth" and stay on the "strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life."<sup>16</sup> Remember Alma's counsel to his son Corianton: "Suffer not yourself to be led away by any vain or foolish thing."<sup>17</sup>

"Keep the commandments. In this there is safety and peace."<sup>18</sup> Nothing this world has to offer can surpass the joy of living the gospel! No worldly wealth or possession, no degree of fame or recognition can supplant the satisfaction of feeling the warmth and peace of the Spirit of the Lord in our hearts and in our homes. "Sweet is the peace the gospel brings."<sup>19</sup> As we strive for success, we cannot allow "any vain or foolish thing" to divert us from the path of faith and lead us away from being *true* to our covenants.

### **"True to the faith"**

I like the word *true*. It powerfully explains basic gospel principles with insightful clarity.

*True* means "steadfast, loyal, . . . honest, just"<sup>20</sup>—all virtues that we should cultivate in our lives.

### **"No hypocrisy and no deception"**

Truth can also describe "that which is [actually] the case rather than what is manifest or assumed," as in the true dimensions of a problem or the true nature of an individual.

Do we, indeed, actually live the gospel, or do we just *manifest* the appearance of righteousness so that those around us *assume* we are faithful when, in reality, our hearts and unseen actions are *not* true to the Lord's teachings?

Do we take on only the “form of godliness” while denying the “power thereof”?<sup>11</sup>

Are we righteous in fact, or do we feign obedience only when we think others are watching?

The Lord has made it clear that He will not be fooled by appearances, and He has warned us not to be false to Him or to others. He has cautioned us to be wary of those who project a false front, who put on a bright pretense that hides a darker reality. We know that the Lord “looketh on the heart” and *not* on the “outward appearance.”<sup>12</sup>

The Savior taught us to “judge not according to the appearance”<sup>13</sup> and warned us against wolves who “come to [us] in sheep’s clothing” and whose deception can only be discovered “by [examining] their fruits.”<sup>14</sup>

Nephi taught that we must walk the path of faith “with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God.”<sup>15</sup>

We know that “a double minded man is unstable in all his ways”<sup>16</sup> and that we cannot “serve two masters.”<sup>17</sup> President Marion G. Romney wisely observed that there are too many of us “who try to serve the Lord without offending the devil.”<sup>18</sup>

“The Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind.”<sup>19</sup> Hence, the first of the Ten Commandments is, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,”<sup>20</sup> and the Savior declared that the first and great commandment is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy mind.”<sup>21</sup> Only when we give our all and overcome our pride and walk the path of faith without deviation can we honestly sing, “Lord, accept our *true* devotion.”<sup>22</sup>

### Faith in every footstep

The valiant pioneer Saints who sacrificed so much “to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion”<sup>23</sup> walked a

path of faith through great physical hardship that forged and tempered their souls. With genuine commitment to the cause of truth, they held fast to the iron rod in spite of opposition or challenge. They were “true to the truth” and gave their all in strengthening and living the restored gospel.

### Be true to your covenants

One of the great blessings of the restored gospel is the privilege of entering into sacred covenants with our Father in Heaven—covenants made binding by virtue of the holy priesthood. When we are baptized and confirmed, when brethren are ordained to the priesthood, when we go to the temple and receive our endowment, when we enter into the new and everlasting covenant of eternal marriage—in all these sacred ordinances, we make solemn commitments to keep God’s commandments.

We covenant that we will show our love for our Heavenly Father through humble service and diligent obedience and prove ourselves to be “good and faithful servant[s].”<sup>24</sup>

If we are true to our covenants, our Father in Heaven will grant us the blessing of “eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.”<sup>25</sup> “All that [the] Father hath”<sup>26</sup> is promised to those who walk the path of faith and remain true to their covenants. Those “who [do] the works of righteousness shall receive [their] reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”<sup>27</sup>

### An eternal calling

Each of you has an eternal calling from which no Church officer has authority to release you. This is a calling given you by our Heavenly Father Himself. In this eternal calling, as with all other callings, you have a stewardship, and “it is required of the Lord, at the

hand of every steward, to render an account of his stewardship, both in time and in eternity."<sup>28</sup> This most important stewardship is the glorious responsibility your Father in Heaven has given you to watch over and care for your own soul.

At some future day, you and I will each hear the voice of the Lord calling us forward to render an account of our mortal stewardship. This accounting will occur when we are called up to "stand before [the Lord] at the great and judgment day."<sup>29</sup>

Each day on this earth is but a small part of eternity. The day of resurrection and final judgment will surely come for each one of us.

Then our Father in Heaven's great and noble heart will be saddened for those of His children who, because they chose evil, will be cast out, unworthy to return to His presence. But He will welcome with loving arms and with indescribable joy those who have chosen to be "true to the truth." Righteous living, combined with the grace of the Atonement, will qualify us to stand before Him with clean hearts and clear consciences.

As leaders of the Church, as servants of a compassionate Father in Heaven, we likewise want each of you to return to His presence. We love you and desire with all our hearts to see you rejoice with your Father in Heaven and with your parents, your children, and other loved ones in that great day of judgment. So we ask you, "Are you true?" And, therefore, we admonish you, as did Jacob, to "prepare your souls for that glorious day when justice shall be administered unto the righteous, even the day of judgment, that ye may not shrink with awful fear; that ye may not remember your awful guilt in perfectness."<sup>30</sup>

### Five suggestions

What can help us to strengthen our resolve to keep on the narrow path of

righteousness and truth so our souls will welcome our day of judgment as a glorious day? May I offer five suggestions.

First, the fundamental reason why the Lord has instructed us to conduct worthiness interviews in His Church is to teach us to keep the commitments we make. In short, we are to be trained during this season of mortal probation to master ourselves,<sup>31</sup> to live with integrity and be true to our covenants. Worthiness interviews are conducted in a spirit of loving concern for each son and daughter of a loving God. These interviews represent the rehearsal stage for final judgment. Such interviews are a blessing, a choice opportunity to account to the Lord through His authorized servants for the sacred stewardship we all have to "watch [ourselves], and [our] thoughts, and [our] words, and [our] deeds."<sup>32</sup>

Second, in the Lord's Church, we are reminded of our sacred covenants every time we partake of the sacrament.

Third, each time we return to the temple, we are reminded of the covenants we make when we receive our endowment.

Fourth, in our home teaching and visiting teaching, do we remember our promise to serve others?<sup>33</sup>

Fifth, the Savior Himself knew, as we should also know, that He was accountable to His Father. He taught that His sacred stewardship was "to do the will of him [who] sent me."<sup>34</sup> In His great intercessory prayer, the Lord reported to the Father, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."<sup>35</sup>

When we are living righteously, we rejoice that we can report positively our worthiness and our preparation for continued blessings, whether they be the honor of receiving the priesthood, the blessings of temple attendance, the satisfaction of the Young Women Personal Progress achievements, or the blessings of service in whatever our calling might be.

Such mortal experiences give us the opportunity to assess what we are doing with our lives. All help us school our souls and strengthen our characters in preparation for that final interview.

And "if [we] are prepared [we] shall not fear."<sup>36</sup>

When we have need to repent, interviews are not always easy. Thank goodness the Lord has called wonderful bishops, stake presidents, and other priesthood leaders who can provide loving guidance to help us repent and cleanse ourselves "that [we] may stand blameless before God at the last day."<sup>37</sup>

### Value of regular spiritual checkups

Worthiness interviews, sacrament meetings, temple attendance, and other Church meetings are all part of the plan that the Lord provides to educate our souls, to help us develop the healthy habit of constantly checking our bearings to stay on the path of faith. Regular spiritual checkups help us navigate life's highways and byways.

In quiet moments of personal reflecting and pondering, I have benefited from humbly asking myself the simple question, "Am I true?"

May I suggest that we can all similarly benefit by looking deep inside our hearts during reverent moments of worship and prayer and asking ourselves this simple question, "Am I true?"

The question becomes more powerfully useful if we are completely honest with our answers and if it motivates us to make repentant course corrections that keep us on the path of faith.

I testify that our Father in Heaven loves each one of us.

If we will be true to the truth, accept the invitation to walk with President Gordon B. Hinckley in the path of faith, and keep our covenants, we will find "peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come."<sup>38</sup> I testify that our Heavenly Father lives and that His

Beloved Son is our Redeemer and that President Gordon B. Hinckley is indeed our prophet, seer, and revelator during this inspiring time of our mortal lives. May we be blessed in our efforts to prepare for that great day when, with our loved ones, we can return rejoicing into the presence of our Father in Heaven, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 43:8.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 109:72; see also Daniel 2:31-45.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, "'True to the Faith,'" *Ensign*, June 1996, 4.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, "'True to the Faith,'" 8; italics added.
5. "Oh Say, What Is Truth?" *Hymns*, no. 272.
6. 2 Nephi 31:18.
7. Alma 39:11.
8. "Keep the Commandments," *Hymns*, no. 303.
9. "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings," *Hymns*, no. 14.
10. Definitions in this and the following paragraph are from *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. [1993], "true," 1268.
11. Joseph Smith—History 1:19.
12. 1 Samuel 16:7.
13. John 7:24.
14. Matthew 7:15-16.
15. 2 Nephi 31:13; see also Jacob 6:5; Mosiah 7:33; 3 Nephi 10:6; Doctrine and Covenants 18:27-28.
16. James 1:8.
17. Matthew 6:24; see also Luke 16:13; 3 Nephi 13:24.
18. Marion G. Romney, "The Price of Peace," *Ensign*, Oct. 1983, 6.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
20. Exodus 20:3.
21. Matthew 22:37-38; italics added; see also verses 36-40.
22. "Lord, Accept Our True Devotion," *Hymns*, no. 107; italics added.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 6:6.
24. Matthew 25:21, 23.



25. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 72:3.
29. 2 Nephi 9:22.
30. 2 Nephi 9:46.
31. See Alma 34:33–37.
32. Mosiah 4:30.
33. See Mosiah 18:8–10.
34. John 4:34.
35. John 17:4.
36. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.
37. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
38. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.

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The chorus sang "Sweet Is the Work."

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### President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve has spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Sweet Is the Work."

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker.

## President James E. Faust

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, I am humbled by the responsibility of addressing you. I would be grateful for your spiritual understanding as I speak of the greatest blessings that can be received in mortality.

### Temple blessings in Nauvoo

On February 3, 1846, it was a bitter cold day in Nauvoo, Illinois. That day, President Brigham Young recorded in his diary:

"Notwithstanding that I had announced that we would not attend to the administration of the ordinances, the House of the Lord was thronged all day. . . . I also informed the brethren that I was going to get my wagons started and be off. I walked some distance from the Temple supposing the crowd would disperse, but on returning I found the house filled to overflowing.

"Looking upon the multitude and knowing their anxiety, as they were thirsting and hungering for the word, we continued at work diligently in the House of the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

And so the temple work continued until 1:30 A.M.

The first two names that appear on the fourth company of the Nauvoo Tem-

ple register for that very day, February 3, 1846, are John and Jane Akerley, who received their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple that evening. They were humble, new converts to the Church, without wealth or position. Their temple work was their final concern as they were leaving their home in Nauvoo to come west. It was fortunate that President Young granted the wish of the Saints to receive their temple blessings because John Akerley died at Winter Quarters, Nebraska. He, along with over 4,000 others, never made it to the valleys of the Rocky Mountains. William Clayton's classic Mormon hymn, "Come, Come, Ye Saints," captures well their faith: "And should we die before our journey's through, Happy day! / All is well!"<sup>2</sup>

### Temple building in the Salt Lake Valley

A temple was announced on July 26, 1847, the second day after the arrival of President Brigham Young in the Great Salt Lake Valley. President Young made this great proclamation before the Saints even had a roof over their heads and while they were still living in wagons or sleeping on the ground. He drove his cane into the ground and said, "Here we

will build the Temple of our God.”<sup>3</sup> This magnificent edifice would require 40 years to build.

Within 10 years of their arrival in the valley, the Saints built the Endowment House, where they could receive some of their temple blessings. As Brigham Young explained, “In consequence of our having been driven from our homes, and because of our destitute circumstances, the Lord has permitted us to do what we have done, namely, to use this Endowment House for temple purposes.”<sup>4</sup> It was dedicated May 5, 1855. Here Elsie Ann, the daughter of John and Jane Akerley, was sealed for time and all eternity to her husband, Henry Jacob Faust, on April 2, 1857.

There were, however, ordinances that could not be administered in the Endowment House, and the work was under way to build the Salt Lake Temple. Referring to this great building that was to stand through the Millennium, Brigham Young announced: “This is not the only temple we shall build; there will be hundreds of them built and dedicated to the Lord.”<sup>5</sup>

The driving force of the pioneers in coming to the West was larger than escaping persecution. They were seeking a place “where none shall come to hurt or make afraid,” where “the Saints [would] be blessed.”<sup>6</sup> Part of the spiritual pull that brought them to the Salt Lake Valley was their vision of a place where they could worship unmolested in a temple of God.

No doubt many of the pioneers had been at the funeral of Joseph Smith Sr. and heard the Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. speak of the strength and comfort his father, the Patriarch of the Church, had received while being in the temple:

“To dwell in the house of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple, was his daily delight; and in it he enjoyed many blessings, and spent many hours in sweet communion with his heavenly Father.

He has trod its sacred aisles, solitary and alone from mankind. . . . In its holy enclosures have the visions of heaven been opened to his mind, and his soul has feasted on the riches of eternity; and there under his teachings have the meek and humble been instructed, while the widow and the orphan have received his patriarchal blessings.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Temples from ancient times until now**

Ancient prophets had the vision of the eternity that lies before us. Indeed, the practice of building special houses of worship and sacred ceremony has been part of the history of the human race for centuries. John the Revelator had a prophetic manifestation regarding temple work. Said he:

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

“And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.”<sup>8</sup>

Many of the Saints, including President Wilford Woodruff, had heard the Prophet Joseph say:

“Brethren I have been very much edified and instructed in your testimonies here tonight, but I want to say to you before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother’s lap. You don’t comprehend it. . . . It is only a little handfull of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world. . . . It will fill the Rocky Mountains. There will be tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints who will be gathered in the Rocky Moun-

tains. . . . This people will go into the Rocky Mountains; they will there build temples to the Most High.”<sup>9</sup>

This prophetic statement has been abundantly fulfilled in every respect.

Twenty-four years after Brigham Young’s cane marked the spot for the Salt Lake Temple, they broke ground for the unique temple in St. George, Utah. In another six years they began building the exquisitely beautiful temples in Manti and Logan, Utah. The work of temple building has continued from that time to the present. Forty-nine operating temples grace much of the earth, with more to be dedicated this year and others announced and planned, as President Hinckley has indicated.

### **Temples answer our deepest questions**

What is the significance of the words of the Prophet Joseph that we will “build temples to the Most High”? Why were all of these temples built at such cost and sacrifice? Why are they still being built at an ever increasing pace? It is because the deepest questions of our existence are answered in the temple. These answers tell us where we came from, why we are here, where we may go, and how we may cope with the matter of death. This life makes no logical sense unless we think in terms of the eternities. The transcendent blessings of life and eternity are received within the sacred walls of the temple. The Savior’s supernal gift to mankind gave us the opportunity for eternal life, but eternal life without our loved ones would be bleak.

A basic eternal truth of this Church is that families may, if they are worthy, have an eternal relationship; for us it would not be heaven without our parents, our grandparents, our eternal companions, our children, and our posterity. This union of families comes through the sealing power exercised within the hallowed walls of the temples under authorized priesthood authority.

An eternal family begins when a young couple kneel at an altar in the holy temple of God and make covenants with each other and with God and receive His greatest promises. This sealing is preceded by each making and receiving covenants which, if they continue worthy, will bless them in this life as well as in the life to come.

The father and mother are equal partners with different roles in nurturing and teaching their family members on the journey to immortality and eternal life. To have full meaning, how can life be other than an eternal process?

Part of the process of reaching into the eternities comes when we must deal with the experience called death. This life is hollow without a belief in and an understanding of immortality. Said Paul, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”<sup>10</sup> The Atonement and the Resurrection of the Savior are the grand keys that open the locks of immortality. The greatest fulfillment of these blessings, if we are worthy, comes to us in the holy temples of God. Within their sacred walls, those who hold the power and authority bind in heaven that which is bound in earth. This authority has been delegated by the President of the Church, who holds and exercises all of the keys of the kingdom of God on earth.

### **All may receive temple blessings**

Fundamental to temple worship is the principle that “God is no respecter of persons.”<sup>11</sup> Within the hallowed walls of the temples, there is no preference of position, wealth, status, race, or education. All dress in white. All receive the same instruction. All make the same covenants and promises. All receive the same transcendent, eternal blessings if they live worthy to claim them. All are equal before their Creator. Those who are single through no fault of their own,

if worthy, will be given the blessings, if they wish, of an eternal family relationship.

We are a covenant-making people. These eternal blessings are for all who wish to worthily receive of them, both the living and the dead. In the mercy of God we are privileged to receive these blessings by proxy for our deceased ancestors who did not have this privilege in life. They, of course, may choose whether to accept these blessings. Our duty is to search out our forebears and give them the opportunity to accept and receive these blessings. As the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead."<sup>12</sup>

### **Temple blessings help us endure**

The opportunity to receive these supernal blessings was given by God in His infinite goodness to the people of this earth through the great prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith. He was commissioned to restore the fulness of all things in our time. This is why temple blessings were one of the last yearnings of President Brigham Young and the pioneers as they left Nauvoo. For the same reason, President Young's thoughts on arriving in the valley of the Great Salt Lake were to again secure these eternal blessings for God's children by building and operating temples.

Temple building and temple worship were paramount reasons for the pioneers' willingness to suffer so greatly and endure so much in their remarkable exodus to the barren, isolated desert of the West. We rejoice that God has, in His divine providence, made possible the building of so many temples in so many countries in our time. No one has dedicated more temples in this dispensation than President Gordon B. Hinckley. Of the 49 operating temples, he has dedicated 24. We hope and pray that temple blessings in time will be available to

more of God's children around the world.

There were over 5,600 members who received their blessings in the Nauvoo Temple. The spiritual leaven given in the Nauvoo Temple blesses us today in an ever increasing measure. It spreads to every house of the Lord in the world so that all who hunger and thirst for the fullness of God's word may be filled.

John and Jane Akerley and the others of the multitude who waited in the bitter cold to enter the majestic Nauvoo Temple received within its walls the greatest blessings offered by the Lord in this life. They endured much, but their suffering was just beginning. Their temple blessings helped strengthen them for what lay ahead. Separated by death in Winter Quarters, they were able to endure all things because of their faith and the blessings received that cold February night in 1846.

As the pioneers had the larger vision in their daily challenge for survival, so also we need to have a greater vision and understanding of our eternal destiny. Our challenges are more subtle but equally hard. Maintaining our spiritual strength is also a daily challenge. The greatest source of that spiritual strength comes, as it did in their time, from our temples.

I urge all who have not yet received these greatest of all blessings within the walls of the temple to do whatever may be necessary to qualify to receive them. To those who have received these blessings, I invite you to prepare yourselves to savor again the experience of being within the sacred premises of the holy temples of God and have the visions of life eternal open again to your hearts, minds, and souls.

This I humbly pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. *History of the Church*, 7:579.
2. *Hymns*, no. 30.

3. As quoted by Heber J. Grant, in Conference Report, Apr. 1921, 211; see also Wilford Woodruff, in *The Utah Pioneers* (1880), 23.
4. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1941), 394.
5. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 395.
6. *Hymns*, no. 30.
7. *History of the Church*, 4:194.
8. Revelation 7:13–15.
9. As quoted by Wilford Woodruff, in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, 57.
10. 1 Corinthians 15:19.
11. Acts 10:34.
12. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 356.

### President Hinckley

Thank you, President Faust. President Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has been our concluding speaker for this session of the conference.

We're grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings

of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

We're grateful for those who have spoken this morning. We feel a particular sense of gratitude concerning Brother Maxwell, who has been blessed of the Lord in a remarkable way. And that blessing has been manifest as he has addressed us this morning. We wish for him continued health and assure him of our continuing prayers in his behalf.

We should say that Brother Paramount has undergone serious surgery and that we shall offer prayers in behalf of him.

We express our appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus for the beautiful music they have provided this morning. Thank you, Brother Bowden and all of your associates, for the great service which you give.

The chorus will now sing "Beautiful Savior." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Seventy. And we shall be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

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The chorus sang "Beautiful Savior."

Elder Jay E. Jensen offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 167th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 5, 1997, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Logan-Ogden combined Institute choirs, under the direction of Brother Don Castleton, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session. We welcome you to the second general session of the 167th Annual General Conference of the Church.

We extend greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the

world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We note that Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin, William R. Bradford, and Kwok Yuen Tai are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall. Elders Robert E. Wells, J. Richard Clarke, James O. Mason, and Dallas N. Archibald are attending the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by the Logan-Ogden combined Institute choirs, under the direction of Brother Don Castleton, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "True to the Faith." The invocation will be offered by Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "True to the Faith."

Elder Harold G. Hillam offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

The choir will now sing "Joseph Smith's First Prayer." Brother Ted E. Davis, chairman of the Church Audit Committee, will then read the report of the Church Audit Committee. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 1996.

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The choir sang "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

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## The Church Audit Committee Report for 1996

### Ted E. Davis

The Church Audit Committee consists of three members who are independent of all Church officers, employees, departments, and Church-owned businesses and affiliates. We report directly to the First Presidency and have access to all records and personnel necessary to perform our responsibilities.

The Church also has an auditing department that is independent of all other Church operations and departments. The Church Auditing Department is separate and independent from the Church Audit Committee. The Church Auditing Department's staff consists of certified public accountants and other professionally qualified auditors. It has established procedures for audits of Church operations in accordance with recognized professional auditing standards. This includes monitoring of con-

tributions and expenditures of local ecclesiastical units.

The Church Audit Committee has reviewed the financial policies and procedures that provide controls over contributions and expenditures of Church funds and that safeguard assets of the Church. We have also reviewed budgeting, accounting and reporting, and auditing systems and reports of the Church for the year ended 31 December 1996.

Expenditures of Church funds for 1996 were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes according to written policies. The Council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation. Administration of approved budgets is controlled through the Budget Department under the direction of the Appropriations and Budget Committees.

Church-owned businesses are managed by professionals who report to in-

dependent boards of directors that do not include General Authorities as members. These companies maintain their own accounting and reporting systems in compliance with accepted business practices and are audited by the Church Auditing Department and/or independent public accounting firms. The board of directors of Deseret Management Corporation consists of General Authorities, who monitor most Church-owned businesses. Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education are audited by independent public accounting firms.

Based on our review of financial, budgeting, and other control policies and procedures, and our review of all audit reports issued in 1996 and responses thereto, the Church Audit Committee is of the opinion that, in all material respects, Church contributions received and expended during the year ended 31 December 1996 have been managed in accordance with established Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Audit Committee  
Ted E. Davis, Chairman  
Donald D. Salmon  
Frank M. McCord

## The Church Statistical Report for 1996

### F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, for the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of 31 December 1996. These statistics are based on 1996 reports available prior to this conference.

### Church units

Stakes.....	2,296
Districts.....	671
Missions.....	309
Wards and branches.....	23,528

These wards and branches are in 140 nations and in 21 territories and possessions.

### Church membership

Total membership.....	9,694,549
Eight-year-old children of record baptized during 1996...	.81,017
Converts baptized during 1996...	.321,385

### Missionaries

Full-time missionaries.....	52,938
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### Prominent members who have passed away since last April

*Elder Lowell D. Wood*, a member of the Seventy; *Elder Lloyd P. George*, an emeritus General Authority; *Sister Florence Smith Prows Cullimore*, widow of Elder James A. Cullimore of the Seventy; *Brother David M. Kennedy*, former special representative of the First Presidency and United States secretary of the treasury; *Brother Terrel H. Bell*, former United States secretary of education; and *Sister Florence Holbrook Richards*, former counselor in the Primary general presidency.

### President Faust

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### **"Bishop, help!"**

My brothers and sisters, I begin by sharing an event from a large ward in Provo about 20 years ago. During a sacrament meeting, a little boy made a big disturbance. After several minutes of trying to quiet this noisy three-year-old, the mother desperately handed him to the father, who was seated on the aisle close to the front of the chapel. By this time the noise distracted the speaker and audience, and everyone was very conscious of the parents' plight. The father's patience was much shorter than the mother's. In a few moments he put the little boy over his shoulder, stood up, and started for the back door. Looking back over his father's shoulder and sensing his determined steps, the little boy became quiet and apprehensive. Just as the father approached the rear door of the chapel, the little fellow reached his arms out toward the stand and shouted, "Bishop, help!"

There are times in the lives of all of us when we must reach out to our bishop or his counselors for help. Perhaps we need inspired counsel and direction to help with our families or our occupations. Perhaps we seek increased understanding of the gospel or the duties of our callings. We may need temporal assistance in a time of stress. We may even reach out for discipline to assist us in getting back on the path of growth. Always we benefit from their stalwart examples. Thank heaven for faithful and inspired bishops and branch presidents and their counselors!

### **Duties of the bishopric**

A bishop (or branch president) has many duties. As the president of the Aaronic Priesthood, he personally oversees the programs and activities of the young men and young women in the

ward. He and his counselors interview each one each year. They give special attention to teaching correct principles. Always they encourage our youth to prepare for the covenants they will make in the temple.

As the presiding high priest, the bishop gives direction to all quorums, auxiliaries, activities, and programs in the ward. Calls to ward positions are under his direction. So are home teaching and visiting teaching, and the performing of ordinances like baptism. Assisted in all of this by his counselors, he is responsible for sacrament meeting and for the teaching of the gospel in all classes in the ward. The bishopric also directs all of the other meetings of the ward, including the priesthood executive committee and the ward council.

The bishopric is also responsible for monitoring the Church-service time of all ward members serving under their direction. Knowing the circumstances of the ward, they determine the appropriate balance of ward meetings and activities and the time remaining for families. They are also conscious of the purpose of our Sunday consolidated meeting schedule, which was not established to give time for more Sabbath meetings but to allow increased time for families to be together and for individual gospel study and service.

The bishopric (or branch presidency) is also in charge of unit finances. They receive tithes and offerings, oversee the unit budget and expenditures, remit funds, and see that records are properly kept. The bishop is the judge who determines how Church commodities and funds are used to provide for the temporal needs of the members. He is also responsible for seeking out the poor and the needy.

The bishop is the judge and the shepherd who has the power of discern-



ment and the right to revelation and inspiration for the guidance of the flock. He is responsible for holding worthiness interviews in order to authorize attendance at the temple, callings to ward positions, ordinations to priesthood offices, and the callings of missionaries. He administers formal and informal discipline for violation of the laws of the Church, and he counsels and helps members avoid the necessity for discipline.

Although some of their duties cannot be delegated, in most of these tasks the bishop and his counselors need the assistance of many others working under their direction: executive secretary, clerks, presidencies and group leadership of quorums, presidencies of auxiliaries, and officers and teachers. A bishop needs to be a skillful delegator, or he will be crushed under the burden of his responsibilities or frustrated at seeing so many of them unfilled.

I marvel at the work of our bishops and branch presidents. In my lifetime, our family has had many bishops. We have loved each of them and their counselors, and we have felt their love and assistance in our lives. Each of them was different in his personality, but each was a devoted servant of the Lord. I have seen the mantle of responsibility increase their stature, and I have rejoiced in their magnificent service to the people. God bless the bishops and bishoprics of this Church!

### **Bishops seek to unify the flock**

There is something else we should mention about bishops. They are not specialists. We do not have bishops whose sole attentions are directed toward the youth, the aged, the married, the abused, or any particular occupational or ethnic group. Under the revelations of the Lord and the directions of His prophets, a bishop is ordained and set apart to preside over a ward whose

boundaries are geographic and whose membership includes all who reside there. For this reason, a bishop looks after the old and the young, the married and the single, the rich and the poor, the active and the less active. In this he seeks to unify the flock so that we may be taught and serve in groups of Saints that transcend considerations of age, marital status, ancestry, and economic condition. Our bishops lead us all in our efforts to follow the Savior's commandment to "be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27).

### **The Lord speaks through His servants**

The Lord told the early members of His Church that the voice of His servants is the voice of the Lord, and that the hand of His servants is the hand of the Lord (see D&C 1:38; 36:2). I testify to the truthfulness of that principle, which imposes a solemn duty upon the members of this Church to be loyal to their leaders and faithful in following their direction. I affirm that the Lord will bless us for doing so. That principle also imposes a great responsibility on the holders of office in this Church. Leaders must assure that they exercise their sacred authority "by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (D&C 121:41).

We now have over 15,000 bishops and over 8,000 branch presidents in this Church. When we count their counselors, the total serving in bishoprics and branch presidencies is over 65,000. We praise and honor these worthy shepherds of the flock, judges in Israel, leaders and teachers of the people, men who love and are loved by those whom they serve as undershepherds of the Lord Jesus Christ. God bless these good men! And God bless their faithful wives, whose loyalty and support make their service possible.

### **"Help the bishop!"**

As I began this talk, I quoted the words of a three-year-old who called, "Bishop, help!" I will now reverse those words and make them a challenge for each of us: "Help the bishop!"

Our current circumstances are different from those experienced by bishops and their counselors and members in earlier times. Today we have local leaders in most parts of the world. Many geographic wards and branches are in large cities and include hundreds of thousands or even millions of people. Some bishops travel during the week or commute long hours and great distances to work, effectively isolated from their families and their members for most of the hours of the week. Nevertheless, we also have communication and transportation resources undreamed of in earlier times. Whatever the physical changes over time, the nature of our local leaders' callings has not changed, nor has their compensation. They are totally uncompensated by the coin of mortality. For the reward of their labors, all rely on the Lord's deferred compensation plan.

Unchanged also is the fact that as they struggle with the heavy duties of their callings, bishops and their counselors must also earn a living and fulfill other family responsibilities. They do this not only because of their love for their wife and children, but also because they are responsible for being role models for the members of their flock. The burden is a heavy one that cannot be fulfilled without the supportive efforts of ward officers and members.

### **Fulfill callings diligently**

How do we help? To lighten the load of the bishopric, auxiliary presidencies and Melchizedek Priesthood quorum presidencies and group leaders need to exercise initiative and fully function in the great responsibilities of their

callings. Bishops are responsible to call; they should not be required to beg or push. All of us should accept the callings we are given and serve in all diligence. The most common calling received for men is home teacher and for women is Relief Society visiting teacher. When properly performed, these vital callings can substantially lighten the load of the bishopric. Home teachers and visiting teachers are the eyes and ears and hands of the bishop. Brothers and sisters, help the bishop and his counselors by reliable, faithful performance of your visits and oversight as home teachers and visiting teachers.

### **Provide for ourselves and our families**

Each of us should do all that we can, in the spirit of gospel self-reliance, to provide for ourselves and our families in a temporal and a spiritual way. Then, if it is necessary to reach out for help, we know we have first done all that we can. This includes helping the members of our immediate and extended families to the maximum extent possible so that the bishop is not faced with burdens that should be handled in the first instance by the individual or by the extended family.

### **Be considerate of leaders' time**

Another way to help our busy bishops and their counselors is to be careful not to occupy their time with matters that others can handle. If we need an address or a phone number or help with some other routine task, we should not call a member of the bishopric. Let us reserve their time for the heavy responsibilities that are uniquely theirs. Let us call on others for the things others can handle.

When contacting our local leaders is necessary, we should remember that they have employment responsibilities too. Don't contact them at their place of work unless there is a true emergency.

Let us be careful not to put our leaders' employment in jeopardy. Members should also be careful not to expect their local leaders to give them the products of those leaders' occupations. Our leaders are called to give us Church service, not professional services or merchandise inventories.

We should remember that our leaders are also husbands and fathers. They are bishops or counselors for a season, but they will never be released from their family responsibilities, which are for eternity. Our leaders need time to perform their family responsibilities also, and our thoughtful consideration will help.

My heart ached for a young mother who wondered what would necessitate her bishop-husband's spending six hours counseling a needy member on a Sunday following sacrament meeting. He did not arrive home until 6:00 P.M., which is bad enough, but this particular Sunday happened to be Christmas Day. I am sure the bishop felt he needed to give the help that was requested, but I also wonder whether a member in distress could not have held some of that need in abeyance long enough for a bishop to enjoy this Christmas afternoon with his family. That is admittedly an extreme example, but the problem is not an exceptional one, as many bishops and their wives would affirm.

A more familiar example was mentioned in a ward I recently attended in Salt Lake City. A wife of a member of

the bishopric was speaking in sacrament meeting. She thanked the members of the ward for not phoning their home on Monday evening. She said that was the only time in the week when she and her children could plan to have their husband and father all to themselves. That forbearance would be good for all wards and branches.

### **The offices of the bishopric are sacred**

Brothers and sisters, the offices of bishop and branch president and counselors are sacred in this Church. The men who hold those offices are respected by the Lord, inspired by His Spirit, and given the powers of discernment necessary to their office. We honor and love them, and we show this by our consideration for them.

I testify of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose Church this is and whose servants they are. I ask the blessings of the Lord on the members and leaders of this Church, general and local, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Faust**

We have just listened to Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Henry B. Eyring, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder Monte J. Brough, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

## **Elder Henry B. Eyring**

### **The Savior wants to lead us to safety**

The Savior has always been the protector of those who would accept His protection. He has said more than once, "How oft would I have gathered you as

a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not" (3 Nephi 10:5).

The Lord expressed the same lament in our own dispensation after describing the many ways in which He calls us to safety:

"How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by mine own voice, and by the voice of thunders, and by the voice of lightnings, and by the voice of tempests, and by the voice of earthquakes, and great hailstorms, and by the voice of famines and pestilences of every kind, and by the great sound of a trumpet, and by the voice of judgment, and by the voice of mercy all the day long, and by the voice of glory and honor and the riches of eternal life, and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation, but ye would not!" (D&C 43:25).

### He counsels us through prophets

There seems to be no end to the Savior's desire to lead us to safety. And there is constancy in the way He shows us the path. He calls by more than one means so that His message will reach those willing to accept it. And those means always include sending the message by the mouths of His prophets whenever people have qualified to have the prophets of God among them. Those authorized servants are always charged with warning the people, telling them the way to safety.

When tensions ran high in northern Missouri in the fall of 1838, the Prophet Joseph Smith called for all the Saints to gather to Far West for protection. Many were on isolated farms or in scattered settlements. He specifically counseled Jacob Haun, founder of a small settlement called Haun's Mill. A record of that time includes this: "Brother Joseph had sent word by Haun, who owned the mill, to inform the brethren who were living there to leave and come to Far West, but Mr. Haun did not deliver the message" (Philo Dibble, in "Early Scenes in Church History," in *Four Faith Promoting Classics* [1968], 90). Later, the Prophet Joseph recorded in his history: "Up to this day God had given me wisdom to save the people who took coun-

sel. None had ever been killed who [had abided] by my counsel" (*History of the Church*, 5:137). Then the Prophet recorded the sad truth that innocent lives could have been saved at Haun's Mill had his counsel been received and followed.

In our own time, we have been warned with counsel on where to find safety from sin and from sorrow. One of the keys to recognizing those warnings is that they are repeated. For instance, more than once in these general conferences, you have heard our prophet say that he would quote a preceding prophet and would therefore be a second witness and sometimes even a third. Each of us who has listened has heard President Kimball give counsel on the importance of a mother in the home and then heard President Benson quote him, and we have heard President Hinckley quote them both. The Apostle Paul wrote that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1). One of the ways we may know that the warning is from the Lord is that the law of witnesses, authorized witnesses, has been invoked. When the words of prophets seem repetitive, that should rivet our attention and fill our hearts with gratitude to live in such a blessed time.

### Follow the prophet or choose another influence

Looking for the path to safety in the counsel of prophets makes sense to those with strong faith. When a prophet speaks, those with little faith may think that they hear only a wise man giving good advice. Then if his counsel seems comfortable and reasonable, squaring with what they want to do, they take it. If it does not, they consider it either faulty advice or they see their circumstances as justifying their being an exception to the counsel. Those without faith may think that they hear only men seeking to exert

influence for some selfish motive. They may mock and deride, as did a man named Korihor, with these words recorded in the Book of Mormon:

"And thus ye lead away this people after the foolish traditions of your fathers, and according to your own desires; and ye keep them down, even as it were in bondage, that ye may glut yourselves with the labors of their hands, that they durst not look up with boldness, and that they durst not enjoy their rights and privileges" (Alma 30:27).

Korihor was arguing, as men and women have falsely argued from the beginning of time, that to take counsel from the servants of God is to surrender God-given rights of independence. But the argument is false because it misrepresents reality. When we reject the counsel which comes from God, we do not choose to be independent of outside influence. We choose another influence. We reject the protection of a perfectly loving, all-powerful, all-knowing Father in Heaven, whose whole purpose, as that of His Beloved Son, is to give us eternal life, to give us all that He has, and to bring us home again in families to the arms of His love. In rejecting His counsel, we choose the influence of another power, whose purpose is to make us miserable and whose motive is hatred. We have moral agency as a gift of God. Rather than the right to choose to be free of influence, it is the inalienable right to submit ourselves to whichever of those powers we choose.

Another fallacy is to believe that the choice to accept or not accept the counsel of prophets is no more than deciding whether to accept good advice and gain its benefits or to stay where we are. But the choice not to take prophetic counsel changes the very ground upon which we stand. It becomes more dangerous. The failure to take prophetic counsel lessens our power to take inspired counsel in the future. The best time to have decided to

help Noah build the ark was the first time he asked. Each time he asked after that, each failure to respond would have lessened sensitivity to the Spirit. And so each time his request would have seemed more foolish, until the rain came. And then it was too late.

Every time in my life when I have chosen to delay following inspired counsel or decided that I was an exception, I came to know that I had put myself in harm's way. Every time that I have listened to the counsel of prophets, felt it confirmed in prayer, and then followed it, I have found that I moved toward safety. Along the path, I have found that the way had been prepared for me and the rough places made smooth. God led me to safety along a path which was prepared with loving care, sometimes prepared long before.

### **Those with priesthood keys lead us to safety**

The account at the beginning of the Book of Mormon is of a prophet of God, Lehi. He was also the leader of a family. He was warned by God to take those he loved to safety. Lehi's experience is a type of what happens as God gives counsel through His servants. Of Lehi's family, only those who had faith and who themselves received confirming revelation saw both the danger and the way to safety. For those without faith, the move into the wilderness seemed not only foolish but dangerous. Like all prophets, Lehi, to his dying day, tried to show his family where safety would lie for them.

He knew that the Savior holds responsible those to whom He delegates priesthood keys. With those keys comes the power to give counsel that will show us the way to safety. Those with keys are responsible to warn even when their counsel might not be followed. Keys are delegated down a line which passes from the prophet through those responsible for ever smaller groups of members,

closer and closer to families and to individuals. That is one of the ways by which the Lord makes a stake a place of safety. For instance, I have sat with my wife in a meeting of parents called by our bishop, our neighbor, so that he could warn us of spiritual dangers faced by our children. I heard more than the voice of my wise friend. I heard a servant of Jesus Christ, with keys, meeting his responsibility to warn and passing to us, the parents, the responsibility to act. When we honor the keys of that priesthood channel by listening and giving heed, we tie ourselves to a lifeline which will not fail us in any storm.

Our Heavenly Father loves us. He sent His Only Begotten Son to be our Savior. He knew that in mortality we would be in grave danger, the worst of it from the temptations of a terrible adversary. That is one of the reasons why the Savior has provided priesthood keys so that those with ears to hear and faith to obey could go to places of safety.

### Accept counsel humbly

Having listening ears requires humility. You remember the Lord's warning to Thomas B. Marsh. He was then the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The Lord knew that President Marsh and his brethren of the Twelve would be tested. He gave counsel about taking counsel. The Lord said, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers" (D&C 112:10).

The Lord added a warning that is applicable to any who follow a living prophet: "Exalt not yourselves; rebel not against my servant Joseph; for verily I say unto you, I am with him, and my hand shall be over him; and the keys which I have given unto him, and also to youward, shall not be taken from him till I come" (D&C 112:15).

### Follow counsel for the safety of others

God offers us counsel not just for our own safety, but for the safety of His other children, whom we should love. There are few comforts so sweet as to know that we have been an instrument in the hands of God in leading someone else to safety. That blessing generally requires the faith to follow counsel when it is hard to do. An example from Church history is that of Reddick Newton Allred. He was one of the rescue party sent out by Brigham Young to bring in the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies. When a terrible storm hit, Captain Grant, captain of the rescue party, decided to leave some of the wagons by the Sweetwater River as he pressed ahead to find the handcart companies. With the blizzards howling and the weather becoming life-threatening, two of the men left behind at the Sweetwater decided that it was foolish to stay. They thought that either the handcart companies had wintered over somewhere or had perished. They decided to return to the Salt Lake Valley and tried to persuade everyone else to do the same.

Reddick Allred refused to budge. Brigham had sent them out, and his priesthood leader had told him to wait there. The others took several wagons, all filled with needed supplies, and started back. Even more tragic, each wagon they met coming out from Salt Lake they turned back as well. They turned back 77 wagons, returning all the way to Little Mountain, where President Young learned what was happening and turned them around again. When the Willie Company was finally found, and had made that heartrending pull up and over Rocky Ridge, it was Reddick Allred and his wagons that waited for them. (See Rebecca Bartholomew and Leonard J. Arrington, *Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies* [1992], 29, 33–34.)

In this conference you will hear inspired counsel, for instance, to reach out to the new members of the Church. Those with the faith of Reddick Newton Allred will keep offering friendship even when it seems not to be needed or to have no effect. They will persist. When some new member reaches the point of spiritual exhaustion, they will be there offering kind words and fellowship. They will then feel the same divine approval Brother Allred felt when he saw those handcart pioneers struggling toward him, knowing he could offer them safety because he had followed counsel when it was hard to do.

While the record does not prove it, I am confident that Brother Allred prayed while he waited. I am confident that his prayers were answered. He then knew that the counsel to stand fast was from God. We must pray to know that. I promise you answers to such prayers of faith.

#### **Be patient when counsel seems not to apply**

Sometimes we will receive counsel that we cannot understand or that seems

not to apply to us, even after careful prayer and thought. Don't discard the counsel, but hold it close. If someone you trusted handed you what appeared to be nothing more than sand with the promise that it contained gold, you might wisely hold it in your hand awhile, shaking it gently. Every time I have done that with counsel from a prophet, after a time the gold flakes have begun to appear and I have been grateful.

We are blessed to live in a time when the priesthood keys are on the earth. We are blessed to know where to look and how to listen for the voice that will fulfill the promise of the Lord that He will gather us to safety. I pray for you and for me that we will have humble hearts, that we will listen, that we will pray, that we will wait for the deliverance of the Lord, which is sure to come as we are faithful. I testify that God, our Heavenly Father, lives and loves us. This is the Church of Jesus Christ. He lives and loves us. He is the head of the Church, and He is our Savior. I testify that Gordon B. Hinckley holds all the keys of the priesthood of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Monte J. Brough**

### **"How come we 'got choosed'?"**

A few years ago, I was privileged to be assigned to the Asia Area Presidency, with the area office being in Hong Kong. Our four youngest children accompanied Sister Brough and me to that fascinating city, where we lived for three very interesting years. Our children were accustomed to the wide-open spaces of western America, and Hong Kong required each child to make some very large personal and emotional adjustments. Many nights we sat around our dining room table in our modest 13th-

floor apartment, trying to help them with school and cultural challenges.

One night, after anxiously working for several hours to complete school assignments, our youngest child, Kami (then eight years old), asked, "Daddy, how come we 'got choosed' to come to Hong Kong?" My first reaction was to be somewhat flippant and say, "Just lucky, I guess." However, I could tell from the very sincere look on this little girl's face that she wanted a grown-up answer to her question. At that moment, as I surveyed the challenges placed on our little family because of my priesthood calling,

I needed to review the answer again for myself.

### The divine nature of our callings

I recalled the day some years earlier when I picked up the telephone to hear the familiar voice of President Spencer W. Kimball, who carefully extended a call to me to serve as a mission president.

After the telephone call, I was troubled with great feelings of inadequacy. My wife and I were yet in our thirties, with a young family of six children. I remembered the deep love and respect that I felt and still feel for my mission president. Could President Kimball have made a mistake? Did they really understand who I was?

A few days later, we were granted an appointment with Elder Rex D. Pinegar. We explained to him our feelings. I will always remember Elder Pinegar's answer: "Brother Brough, have you a testimony as to the divine calling of our prophets and other Church leaders?"

"Yes, I do," I answered. "From my earliest childhood, I have believed in the sacred callings of our Church leaders. From the deepest part of my soul, I believe President Spencer W. Kimball to be a prophet."

Elder Pinegar then said, "Now you must gain a testimony as to the divine nature of your own calling. You must come to know that *you* also have been called of God."

Paul the Apostle had gained a personal testimony of his own "holy calling" and also that of Timothy. He declared that God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9).

This powerful personal witness would require Timothy to "be [a] partaker of the afflictions of the gospel

according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8).

As Kami and I read this scripture together, I could see that she very much wanted to understand. I wanted her to know that there can be some "afflictions" associated with our callings in the Church. We talked about being away from our home and family members. I understood it was difficult for her to adjust to these new surroundings.

It was obvious, however, that I was *still* short of my objective when she asked, "But, Daddy, why did we 'get choosed' and not someone else?" Now that is a much more difficult question. Why do these callings and responsibilities come to some and not to others? I was reminded of the charge President Hinckley gave me upon my ordination as a Seventy. He said: "Brother Brough, now a lot of people are going to say a lot of nice things about you. Don't believe them!"

It is very dangerous for any of us to think we have earned the right to a Church calling. However, every member must come to know the sacred nature of his or her own service in the Church. I remember my Primary teacher, Sister Mildred Jacobson, who I believe was divinely called to her position of responsibility. Two bishops, Bishop Lynn McKinnon and Bishop Ross Jackson, who served during my youth, played significant roles in the lives of many. I believe they were called of God in the same process of revelation as were Paul and Timothy.

### "I have chosen you"

We must each prepare ourselves for every good work that might come to us and then accept the principle that revelation, not aspiration, is the basis for our respective callings. We can learn much from the following New Testament story:



"Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

"... She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom" (Matthew 20:20-21).

I explained to Kami that Zebedee's children were the Apostles James and John, who would later sit with Peter, one on his right hand and the other on his left. Then we read together how Jesus answered the devoted mother: "To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father" (Matthew 20:23).

The Apostles also were taught concerning their important calling when Jesus reminded them, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you" (John 15:16).

### **A taxi ride in New Delhi**

I explained to Kami that we definitely had been chosen because we would not seek such a challenging assignment. This was reinforced just a few days later when Sister Brough and I were assigned to travel to India for a missionary conference. The flight from Hong Kong to New Delhi, India, was a late-night flight that arrived in New Delhi at about two o'clock in the morning. Even at that late hour, there were hundreds of taxi drivers who wanted to provide our transportation. After selecting a driver, we began our journey of about 40 kilometers to the hotel. Even though it was late, the roads were crowded with animals, people, and other vehicles. As we were going through an intersection, the taxi's motor quit. I watched with increasing anxiety as the driver fruitlessly attempted to start the motor. Finally, in obvious frustration, the driver turned to me and in his very best English said, "Push taxi!" It was three o'clock in the

morning, and my wife and I were very tired. I got out of the taxi and tried to push it across the intersection but was not able to do so. The driver then said to my wife, "Push taxi." Lanette got out of the car and began to help me push the taxi through the intersection. As we were struggling to get the taxi through the traffic, I said to my wife, "There were a few things we didn't understand when we were given this assignment."

### **Divine calling of missionaries**

I shall never forget the experience we had in June of 1993 at a special meeting in Beijing, China, with couples who were then teaching English in North Vietnam and Mongolia. After two days of training and inspiration, we closed with this familiar song:

It may not be on the mountain height  
Or over the stormy sea,  
It may not be at the battle's front  
My Lord will have need of me.  
("I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," *Hymns*, no. 270)

As we were singing, my wife leaned over and whispered in my ear: "But it might be 'on the mountain height,' or it might be 'over the stormy sea,' or it might be 'at the battle's front.'" The Lord surely had need for these beautiful people serving in this interesting area of the world. These wonderful missionary couples did not choose to come to these countries. Yet as we now look at the results of their service, I know that they were chosen by the Lord for their special calling.

On four different occasions, Sister Brough and I and our family have excitedly opened the envelope containing the mission call and assignment for one of our children. Each time, we have contemplated with excitement the various possibilities for their service. While pref-

erences were expressed, the moment their eyes saw the words "You are hereby assigned to serve in the (blank) mission," without exception a wonderful feeling of good and right came over each family member. We each knew that a prophet had guided a divine selection process to which four of our children have gladly responded. Tens of thousands of returned missionaries can also testify of this process and the divine inspiration of their own missionary calling.

### **Church service is based on revelation**

I never completely satisfied little Kami's question that night. Over the years, we have recalled that challenging evening when a small child was a bit overwhelmed with life. We have explored other scriptures and many other stories since that time. We have received the wonderful promise to those the Savior had chosen "that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it [to] you" (John 15:16).

That promise—of answer to our prayers—is directed even to a small

child. This was reaffirmed recently when I heard Kami, now 15 years old, respond to a question directed to her by an adult friend: "How come you were so lucky to live in Hong Kong when you were a child?" She looked directly at me as she gave her answer to our friend: "It wasn't luck; we 'were chosen.'"

That personal and prophetic revelation is the foundation upon which our Church service is firmly based is my witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Faust**

We have just listened to Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, followed by Elder Monte J. Brough of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Elder Sheldon F. Child of the Seventy will then speak to us.

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The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

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## **Elder Sheldon F. Child**

### **His word was as good as his bond**

I was raised on a small farm in northern Utah. We were blessed to have enough land—not enough to make a living, but enough to make work for a young boy. My parents were good, hard-working, industrious people. In order to make ends meet, my father took outside employment. Each morning before he left for work, he would make a list of chores he wanted me to accomplish before he came home that evening.

I remember on one occasion one of the items on the list was to take a small broken part from our hay rake to the blacksmith shop to have it repaired. I

was uncomfortable about going. My father hadn't left any money, and I wondered what I should do. I put off going as long as I could. When all my other chores were finished, I knew I couldn't avoid it any longer. Father expected the broken part to be repaired when he came home, and it was my responsibility to see that it was done.

I can still remember walking the mile or so to the blacksmith shop. I even remember how uncomfortable I was as I watched him weld the part. As he finished, I nervously told him that I had no money, but that my father would pay him later. I'm sure he sensed my anxiety. He patted me on the shoulder and said,

"Son, don't worry, *your father's word is as good as his bond.*" I remember running all the way home, relieved that the part had been repaired and grateful that my father was known as a man whose word was as good as his bond.

As a boy I didn't fully understand what that meant, but I knew it was good and something to be desired. It was years later that I recognized that a person whose word is as good as his bond is a person of honesty and integrity, a person to be trusted. In today's world, there are some who think nothing of breaking their word, their promises, their covenants with man and with God. What a blessing it is to deal with those whom we can trust.

### **Nephi and Zoram could be trusted**

A powerful example of this can be found in the Book of Mormon. You will remember the assignment given to Nephi and his brothers by their father, Lehi, to go to Jerusalem to obtain the plates of brass from Laban. After an unsuccessful attempt, the brothers desired to return to their father in the wilderness. Nephi recognized that they had a task to perform, an assignment to fulfill. He stated, "We will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us."<sup>1</sup> They tried again, and again they failed. Nephi then "crept into the city and went forth towards the house of Laban."<sup>2</sup> It was there that he found Laban drunken with wine and obeyed the voice of the Spirit, which said to him: "Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands. . . . It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief."<sup>3</sup> Then, putting on the clothes of Laban, he went to the treasury and obtained the plates. Nephi had accomplished that which he had been sent to do.

But we must not overlook the powerful example of Laban's servant, Zoram.

Nephi commanded Zoram to follow him as he left the treasury, and it was only when he called to his brothers that Zoram realized that it was Nephi and not Laban whom he had followed. The scriptures tell us that Zoram "began to tremble, and was about to flee,"<sup>4</sup> when Nephi seized him and told him he need not fear, that he should be a free man if he would go down into the wilderness with them. Zoram promised that he would; he gave his word. And Nephi said that "when Zoram had made an oath unto us, our fears did cease concerning him."<sup>5</sup> He was a man to be trusted; his oath was binding; his word was as good as his bond.

### **Honesty is essential today**

Honesty and integrity are not old-fashioned principles. They are just as viable in today's world. We have been taught in the Church that:

When we say we will do something, we do it.

When we make a commitment, we honor it.

When we are given a calling, we fulfill it.

When we borrow something, we return it.

When we have a financial obligation, we pay it.

When we enter into an agreement, we keep it.

President N. Eldon Tanner related the following experience:

"A young man came to me not long ago and said, 'I made an agreement with a man that requires me to make certain payments each year. I am in arrears, and I can't make those payments, for if I do, it is going to cause me to lose my home. What shall I do?'"

"I looked at him and said, 'Keep your agreement.'"

"Even if it costs me my home?"

"I said, 'I am not talking about your home. I am talking about your agreement; and I think your wife would rather

have a husband who would keep his word, meet his obligations, keep his pledges or his covenants, and have to rent a home than to have a home with a husband who will not keep his covenants and his pledges.”<sup>6</sup>

We are all familiar with the statement “Honesty is the best policy.” For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, honesty is the *only* policy. We must be honest with our fellowmen. We must be honest with our God. We are honest with God when we honor the covenants we make with Him.

### **Be honest with God by keeping covenants**

We are a covenant-making people. We make covenants at the waters of baptism.<sup>7</sup> We renew those covenants each week as we worthily partake of the sacrament. We take upon ourselves the name of Christ; we promise to always remember Him and to keep His commandments. And in return He promises us that His Spirit will always be with us. We make covenants as we enter into the temple, and in return we receive the promised blessings of eternal life—if we keep those sacred covenants.

Covenants with God are not to be taken lightly. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord tells us, “I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy.”<sup>8</sup>

The account of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies in the Book of Mormon is a touching example of this. Ammon and his brethren spent 14 years preaching to the Lamanite people. Thousands were brought to the knowledge of the truth, and those who were converted unto the Lord “never did fall away.”<sup>9</sup> “For they were perfectly honest and upright in all things; and they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end.”<sup>10</sup> They were so grateful for the mercy of God that

they covenanted with Him “that rather than shed the blood of their brethren they would give up their own lives.”<sup>11</sup> You will remember that they buried their weapons of war in the ground. They were so true to that covenant that even when the armies of the Lamanites came upon them, “they went out to meet them, and prostrated themselves before them to the earth, and began to call on the name of the Lord.”<sup>12</sup> They offered no resistance. Many were slain. These people were willing to die rather than break the covenant that they had made with the Lord.

### **Rewards of honesty**

In our dealings with both God and our fellowmen, let us be examples of honesty and integrity. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin tells us:

“The rewards of integrity are immeasurable. One is the indescribable inner peace that comes from knowing we are doing what is right; another is an absence of the guilt and anxiety that accompany sin. Another reward of integrity is the confidence it can give us in approaching God. . . . The consummate reward of integrity is the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. . . . Let us live true to the trust the Lord has placed in us.”<sup>13</sup>

It is my prayer that we may honor the commitments and covenants that we make with God and with our fellowmen, that it can be said of each of us, “Our word is as good as our bond.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. 1 Nephi 3:15.
2. 1 Nephi 4:5.
3. 1 Nephi 4:12–13.
4. 1 Nephi 4:30.
5. 1 Nephi 4:37.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1966, 99; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1966, 1137.
7. See Mosiah 18:8–10.

8. Doctrine and Covenants 98:14.
9. Alma 23:6.
10. Alma 27:27.
11. Alma 24:18.
12. Alma 24:21.
13. *Finding Peace in Our Lives* (1995), 193–94.

## President Faust

Elder Sheldon F. Child of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

Elder Dennis E. Simmons of the Seventy will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder Jerald L. Taylor of the Seventy.

## Elder Dennis E. Simmons

### “My peace I give unto you”

During the last few days of the Savior’s mortal ministry, He finalized His instruction to His Apostles. They had been with Him during His three-year ministry, but now He completed His teaching that had come line upon line and precept upon precept as rapidly as they had been able to receive it.

Knowing the end of His ministry was near, He told them of His impending departure: “Yet a little while I am with you. . . . Whither I go, ye cannot come” (John 13:33).

Fear, frustration, and concern must have gripped these humble disciples. Jesus had been their security, their help, their light. What could they do without His direction, His instruction, His example, His comfort?

In love and compassion, the Master assured them:

“I will not leave you comfortless” (John 14:18).

“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

“ . . . He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:16–17, 26).

To His apostolic friends and for the benefit of all believers, Jesus added a significant benediction: “Peace I leave with you, *my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth*, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27; italics added).

The scriptures testify that the promise was fulfilled in the lives of His servants in the meridian of time. We testify that the fulfillment continues in this dispensation of the fulness of times.

### Peace in the midst of tribulation

It should be noted that Jesus promised *His* peace—not the peace that the world gives. The world cries out for freedom from war, from violence, from oppression, from injustice, from contention, from disease and distress. That the Savior did not expect such worldly peace is clear from His concluding remark as He finished His special teaching to His Apostles: “These things I have spoken unto you, that *in me ye might have peace*. In the world ye *shall* have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33; italics added).

In mortality tribulation would continue. But in the midst of that tribulation His followers would have peace in Him. In other words, even if all the world is crumbling around us, the promised Comforter will provide His peace as a result of true discipleship. Ultimate total

peace will come, of course, because He overcame the world. But we can have His peace with us irrespective of the troubles of the world. *His* peace is that peace, that serenity, that comfort spoken to our hearts and minds by the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, as we strive to follow *Him* and keep *His* commandments.

"Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me" (D&C 19:23).

"He who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23).

### Peace through the still, small voice

Just as Helaman discovered in the midst of battle that "he did speak peace to our souls" (Alma 58:11) and Oliver Cowdery had peace spoken to his mind when he cried unto the Lord in his heart that he might know concerning the truth of the Book of Mormon (see D&C 6:22-23), all sincere seekers can have that same peace spoken to them. That peace comes from the assurances spoken by a still, small voice. The Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit who generally communicates not through physical senses but by touching the heart and mind; in other words, He speaks through thoughts, impressions, and feelings and does so softly.

As Elder Packer has stated: "The Spirit does not get our attention by shouting or shaking us with a heavy hand. Rather it whispers. It caresses so gently that if we are preoccupied we may not feel it at all" ("The Candle of the Lord," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 53).

### Surrender to the power of the Spirit

Accordingly, many do not hear the voice. In fact, many do not *want* to hear the voice. Many men desire to be, and

are determined to be self-sufficient, rejecting and scoffing at anything which would potentially call into question their own power or ability. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

But although the Spirit is gentle, it speaks with great power. To receive the Spirit, a type of surrender is necessary. A few years before the first advent of Jesus Christ, the Nephite prophets "Nephi and Lehi were encircled about as if by fire" while confined in prison (Helaman 5:23). Their would-be slayers heard "a voice as if it were above the cloud of darkness" which had gripped the crowd of unbelievers, calling them to repentance as the earth shook (Helaman 5:29).

"When they heard this voice, and beheld that it was not a voice of thunder, neither was it a voice of a great tumultuous noise, but behold, it was a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper, and it did *pierce even to the very soul*—And notwithstanding the mildness of the voice, behold the earth shook exceedingly," they were motivated to repent and have faith in Christ (Helaman 5:30-31; italics added).

"And behold, the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven, and did enter into their hearts, and they were filled as if with fire, and they could speak forth marvelous words. And it came to pass that there came a voice unto them, yea, a pleasant voice, as if it were a whisper, saying: Peace, peace be unto you" (Helaman 5:45-47).

They surrendered—surrendered to a power unseen, but capable of penetrating any willing heart.

### Fruits of the Spirit

Paul described the fruit of the Spirit—that is, what the Spirit produces: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,

longsuffering, gentleness"; and he observed, "Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). In other words, the Spirit can penetrate anything. No law can be passed which will preclude the Spirit from doing His work with an obedient follower of Christ. The scriptures teach us that the Spirit:

- Enlightens the mind (see D&C 6:15).
- "Leadeth to do good— . . . to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously" (D&C 11:12).
- Fills the soul with joy (see D&C 11:13; Mosiah 4:20).
- Reveals the "truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5).
- Bears record of Father and Son (see D&C 20:27).
- Knows all things (see D&C 42:17).
- Convinces (see D&C 100:8).
- Gives knowledge (see D&C 121:26).
- Speaks in a "still small voice" (1 Nephi 17:45).
- Teaches a man to pray (see 2 Nephi 32:8).
- Brings about mighty change (see Mosiah 5:2).
- Gives assurances (see Alma 58:11).

- Fills with "hope and perfect love" (Moroni 8:26).
- Gives liberty (see 2 Corinthians 3:17).
- Comforts (see John 14:16).
- Speaks peace (Alma 58:11).
- Is available (see D&C 6:14).

### **Comfort is available to all**

Just as Jesus' anxious Apostles were given peace by "another Comforter," so today can all men and women receive the same marvelous blessing each day of their lives: the teenager challenged by peer pressure, the person torn by seemingly overwhelming passions or emotions, the person encircled about by loneliness and despair, the hungry, the oppressed, the forgotten, the frightened, the abused, the abuser, the liar, the thief—all who will surrender, follow the Master, and do His works are entitled to the same peace.

Jesus' invitation is extended to all: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Jerald L. Taylor**

My dear brothers and sisters, this afternoon I would like to speak about gratitude: first, for a loving family; second, for a living prophet; and third, for the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Gratitude for a loving family**

Nephi stated that he had "been born of goodly parents" (1 Nephi 1:1). I echo his same words, for I too was born of goodly parents—a father who was a faithful Latter-day Saint who honored his priesthood and a loving mother who

died when I was a young child, leaving my father with six children. My father remarried a widow with nine children, thus giving me in all five brothers and nine sisters. I am grateful for my second mother, who loved me as one of her own and who was an example to me. I thank my Father in Heaven for all of my brothers and sisters, who have loved and supported me and who also love the gospel and the Lord. It has now been 54 years since the Lunt-Taylor family was joined together, and even though our parents are gone, we feel unity and love for each

other. I also have felt the love and support of grandparents, uncles and aunts, and other relatives.

I am grateful for my loving and devoted wife, Sharon, and our six children, two sons-in-law, and five grandchildren. The Psalmist said: "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord. . . . Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Psalm 127:3, 5). I am grateful for this heritage of the Lord and for their love and support.

### **Gratitude for a living prophet**

I express gratitude for a living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. Last November he visited many South American countries, including Chile. That same week Chile hosted an important summit meeting for all nations of Latin America. There were presidents and dignitaries from 16 different countries. Streets in the areas where they stayed and met were barricaded. Day and night, sirens wailed and red lights flashed to make way for those men as they traveled back and forth from their meetings. In the midst of all the commotion, President Hinckley arrived. There was no fanfare and no special welcome, recognition, or privilege extended to him. Two vans left the airport and maneuvered through the streets of Santiago, one carrying the Lord's living prophet. At the hotel there were police and guards to protect the summit visitors, while President Hinckley, with his family and others, entered unnoticed.

My mind went back to a stable many years ago, where the birth of the Son of God went unnoticed except for a few shepherds in the fields watching over their flocks. God's kingdom on earth moves quietly along behind the scenes of more-publicized events.

The next day, as President Hinckley spoke to over 50,000 Saints and testified

of Christ and of His Church, one could feel his conviction. He told all present that he wanted them to remember that they had heard Gordon B. Hinckley say that God lives and Jesus is the Christ. He counseled the Saints to put their lives in order, to teach their children the ways of the Lord, and to form eternal families by being sealed in the temple. At the conclusion of the conference, with tears in their eyes and a testimony in their hearts that here, truly, was a prophet of God on earth, the vast congregation stood and waved white handkerchiefs in farewell. President Hinckley took his handkerchief from his pocket and with love returned their farewell. I know, as those many Saints in Chile and throughout the world know, that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the living prophet of God on earth. I am grateful for him and for his example.

### **Gratitude for the Lord Jesus Christ**

I express gratitude and love for Jesus Christ and His Atonement, for His willingness to leave the realms of the heavens as a God and come to earth as a lowly babe, born in a stable to Mary and Joseph because there was no room for them in the inn. He lived a life of service, forgetting Himself in the cause of His Father's other children. His desire was to fulfill the Father's will, which is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

In the final hours of His mortal life, He went into the Garden of Gethsemane and took upon Himself the sins of *all* mankind, from Adam until the last person born on earth. There He "suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent" (D&C 19:16). His own words describe that experience: "Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at



every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink” (D&C 19:18). A few hours later, He was tried and judged of men and then crucified on a cross. The great Jehovah, the Creator of this world and worlds without number, submitted Himself humbly to the desires of evil men and thus accomplished the will of the Father.

### **Learn to use the key called repentance**

The resurrected Savior taught the people in the Americas “that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world” (3 Nephi 27:16). In writing of repentance, President Boyd K. Packer said: “In the universal battle for human souls, the adversary takes enormous numbers of prisoners. Many, knowing of no way to escape, are pressed into his service. Every soul confined in a concentration camp of sin and guilt has a key to the gate. The key is labeled Repentance. The adversary cannot hold them, if they know how to use it. The twin principles of repentance and forgiveness exceed in strength the awesome power of the tempter” (*The Things of the Soul* [1996], 114).

The Lord said in Isaiah, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). The Lord has said in our day: “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more. By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:42–43).

Jesus Christ is the judge of all: “The keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate” (2 Nephi 9:41). I feel He will be disappointed if we are not worthy to live with Him and His Father. Brothers and sisters, may we know how to use the key labeled repentance so that we may, as we stand before the Savior, “listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading [our] cause before him—

“Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified;

“Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life” (D&C 45:3–5).

### **Testimony of the Savior**

My desire is to be worthy to have this everlasting life with Jesus Christ and our Father, and I pray we will all have this same desire and strive to achieve it.

I bear witness that Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God, our Lord and Savior. At this special time, as we remember His Resurrection, I express my deep gratitude for Him and for His Atonement, and I do so in His name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Faust**

We have just listened to Elders Dennis E. Simmons and Jerald L. Taylor of the Seventy.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### Tribute to mothers

There are some lines attributed to Victor Hugo which read:

"She broke the bread into two fragments and gave them to her children, who ate with eagerness. 'She hath kept none for herself,' grumbled the sergeant.

"'Because she is not hungry,' said a soldier.

"'No,' said the sergeant, 'because she is a mother.'"

In a year when we are celebrating the faith and valor of those who made that exacting trek across Iowa, Nebraska, and Wyoming, I wish to pay tribute to the modern counterparts of those pioneer mothers who watched after, prayed for, and far too often buried their babies on that long trail. To the women within the sound of my voice who dearly want to be mothers and are not, I say through your tears and ours on that subject, God will yet, in days that lie somewhere ahead, bring "hope to [the] desolate heart."<sup>1</sup> As prophets have repeatedly taught from this pulpit, ultimately "no blessing shall be withheld" from the faithful, even if those blessings do not come immediately.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime we rejoice that the call to nurture is not limited to our own flesh and blood.

In speaking of mothers I do not neglect the crucial, urgent role of fathers, particularly as fatherlessness in contemporary homes is considered by some to be "the central social problem of our time."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, fatherlessness can be a problem even in a home where the father is present—eating and sleeping, so to speak, "by remote." But that is a priesthood message for another day. Today I wish to praise those motherly hands that have rocked the infant's cradle and, through the righteousness taught to their children there, are at the very center of the Lord's purposes for us in mortality.

In so speaking I echo Paul, who wrote in praise of Timothy's "unfeigned faith . . . , which dwelt first," he said, "in thy grandmother Lois, and [in] thy mother Eunice."<sup>4</sup> "From [the days when thou wert] a child," Paul said, "thou hast known the holy scriptures."<sup>5</sup> We give thanks for all the mothers and grandmothers from whom such truths have been learned at such early ages.

### Sacrifices made by young mothers

In speaking of mothers generally, I especially wish to praise and encourage *young* mothers. The work of a mother is hard, too often unheralded work. The young years are often those when either husband or wife—or both—may still be in school or in those earliest and leanest stages of developing the husband's breadwinning capacities. Finances fluctuate daily between low and nonexistent. The apartment is usually decorated in one of two smart designs—Deseret Industries provincial or early Mother Hubbard. The car, if there is one, runs on smooth tires and an empty tank. But with night feedings and night teething, often the greatest challenge of all for a young mother is simply fatigue. Through these years, mothers go longer on less sleep and give more to others with less personal renewal for themselves than any other group I know at any other time in life. It is not surprising when the shadows under their eyes sometimes vaguely resemble the state of Rhode Island.

Of course the irony is that this is often the sister we want to call—or need to call—to service in the ward and stake auxiliaries. That's understandable. Who wouldn't want the exemplary influence of these young Loises- and Eunices-in-the-making? Everyone, be wise. Remember that families are the highest priority of all, especially in those formative years. Even so, young mothers will

still find magnificent ways to serve faithfully in the Church, even as others serve and strengthen them and their families in like manner.

Do the best you can through these years, but whatever else you do, cherish that role that is so uniquely yours and for which heaven itself sends angels to watch over you and your little ones. Husbands—especially husbands—as well as Church leaders and friends in every direction, be helpful and sensitive and wise. Remember, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”<sup>6</sup>

Mothers, we acknowledge and esteem your faith in every footstep. Please know that it is worth it then, now, and forever. And if, for whatever reason, you are making this courageous effort alone, without your husband at your side, then our prayers will be all the greater for you, and our determination to lend a helping hand even more resolute.

### Mothers do God's work

One young mother wrote to me recently that her anxiety tended to come on three fronts. One was that whenever she heard talks on LDS motherhood, she worried because she felt she didn't measure up or somehow wasn't going to be equal to the task. Second, she felt like the world expected her to teach her children reading, writing, interior design, Latin, calculus, and the Internet—all before the baby said something terribly ordinary, like “goo goo.” Third, she often felt people were sometimes patronizing, almost always without meaning to be, because the advice she got or even the compliments she received seemed to reflect nothing of the mental investment, the spiritual and emotional exertion, the long-night, long-day, stretched-to-the-limit demands that sometimes are required in trying to be and wanting to be the mother God hopes she will be.

But one thing, she said, keeps her going: “Through the thick and the thin of this, and through the occasional tears of it all, *I know deep down inside I am doing God's work*. I know that in my motherhood I am in an eternal partnership with Him. I am deeply moved that God finds His ultimate purpose and meaning in being a parent, even if some of His children make Him weep.

“It is this realization,” she says, “that I try to recall on those inevitably difficult days when all of this can be a bit overwhelming. Maybe it is precisely our inability and anxiousness that urge us to reach out to Him and enhance His ability to reach back to us. Maybe He secretly hopes we *will* be anxious,” she said, “and *will* plead for His help. Then, I believe, He can teach these children directly, through us, but with no resistance offered. I like that idea,” she concludes. “It gives me hope. If I can be right before my Father in Heaven, perhaps His guidance to our children can be unimpeded. Maybe then it can be *His* work and *His* glory in a very literal sense.”<sup>7</sup>

### Your children will call you blessed

In light of that kind of expression, it is clear that some of those Rhode Island-sized shadows come not just from diapers and carpooling but from at least a few sleepless nights spent searching the soul, seeking earnestly for the capacity to raise these children to be what God wants them to be. Moved by that kind of devotion and determination, may I say to mothers collectively, in the name of the Lord, you are magnificent. You are doing terrifically well. The very fact that you have been given such a responsibility is everlasting evidence of the trust your Father in Heaven has in you. He knows that your giving birth to a child does not immediately propel you into the circle of the omniscient. If you and your husband will strive to love God and live the gospel yourselves; if you will

plead for that guidance and comfort of the Holy Spirit promised to the faithful; if you will go to the temple to both make and claim the promises of the most sacred covenants a woman or man can make in this world; if you will show others, including your children, the same caring, compassionate, forgiving heart you want heaven to show you; if you try your best to be the best parent you can be, you will have done all that a human being can do and all that God expects you to do.

Sometimes the decision of a child or a grandchild will break your heart. Sometimes expectations won't immediately be met. Every mother and father worries about that. Even that beloved and wonderfully successful parent President Joseph F. Smith pled, "Oh! God, let me not lose my own."<sup>8</sup> That is every parent's cry, and in it is something of every parent's fear. But no one has failed who keeps trying and keeps praying. You have every right to receive encouragement and to know in the end your children will call your name blessed, just like those generations of foremothers before you who hoped your same hopes and felt your same fears.

Yours is the grand tradition of Eve, the mother of all the human family, the one who understood that she and Adam *had* to fall in order that "men [and women] might be"<sup>9</sup> and that there would be joy. Yours is the grand tradition of Sarah and Rebekah and Rachel, without whom there could not have been those magnificent patriarchal promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which bless us all. Yours is the grand tradition of Lois and Eunice and the mothers of the 2,000 stripling warriors. Yours is the grand tradition of Mary, chosen and foreordained from before this world was, to conceive, carry, and bear the Son of God Himself. We thank all of you, including our own mothers, and tell you there is nothing more important in this world than participating so directly in

the work and glory of God, in bringing to pass the mortality and earthly life of His daughters and sons, so that immortality and eternal life can come in those celestial realms on high.

### **Rely on the Savior forever**

When you have come to the Lord in meekness and lowliness of heart and, as one mother said, "pounded on the doors of heaven to ask for, to plead for, to demand guidance and wisdom and help for this wondrous task," that door is thrown open to provide you the influence and the help of all eternity. Claim the promises of the Savior of the world. Ask for the healing balm of the Atonement for whatever may be troubling you or your children. Know that in faith things will be made right in spite of you or, more correctly, because of you.

You can't possibly do this alone, but you *do* have help. The Master of Heaven and Earth is there to bless you—He who resolutely goes after the lost sheep, sweeps thoroughly to find the lost coin, waits everlastingly for the return of the prodigal son. Yours is the work of salvation, and therefore you will be magnified, compensated, made more than you are and better than you have ever been as you try to make honest effort, however feeble you may sometimes feel that to be.

Remember, remember all the days of your motherhood: "Ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save."<sup>10</sup>

Rely on Him. Rely on Him heavily. Rely on Him forever. And "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope."<sup>11</sup> You are doing God's work. You are doing it wonderfully well. He is blessing you and He will bless you, even—no, *especially*—when your days and your nights may be the most challenging. Like the woman

who anonymously, meekly, perhaps even with hesitation and some embarrassment, fought her way through the crowd just to touch the hem of the Master's garment, so Christ will say to the women who worry and wonder and sometimes weep over their responsibility as mothers, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole."<sup>12</sup> And it will make your children whole as well.

In the sacred and holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. "Redeemer of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 6; see also 3 Nephi 22:1.
2. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954-56), 2:76; Harold B. Lee, *Ye Are the Light of the World: Selected Sermons and Writings of President Harold B. Lee* (1974), 292; and Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 94.
3. Tom Lowe, "Fatherlessness: The Central Social Problem of Our Time," Claremont Institute Home Page Editorial, Jan. 1996.
4. 2 Timothy 1:5.
5. 2 Timothy 3:15.
6. Ecclesiastes 3:1.
7. Personal correspondence.
8. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 462.
9. 2 Nephi 2:25.
10. 2 Nephi 31:19.

11. 2 Nephi 31:20.

12. Matthew 9:22.

## President Faust

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 A.M. to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow the broadcast.

We express gratitude to the Logan-Ogden combined Institute choir for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon.

The choir will now sing in closing "I Feel My Savior's Love." Following the singing the benediction will be offered by Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "I Feel My Savior's Love."

The benediction was offered by Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 167th Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 5, 1997. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Ricks College combined men's choir. Kevin Brower

and Steve Greason directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, what a wonderful sight you are, you who are gathered in the Taber-

nacle. We extend a welcome to each of you and to all of the many thousands of men scattered in halls across the land, and over into Europe and elsewhere, in this great priesthood gathering. These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and to various locations across the world.

We note that Elders Russell M. Nelson, Rex D. Pinegar, and Kenneth Johnson are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; Elders Earl C. Tingey, Angel Abrea, John M. Madsen, and John B. Dickson in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building; and L. Aldin Porter and F. David Stanley on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those who were not present this morning, we announce that during this morning's session, Elders Gary J. Coleman, John M. Madsen, Wm. Rolfe Kerr, and Carl B. Pratt were called as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy; Elders Richard D. Allred, Eran A. Call, Richard E. Cook, Duane B. Gerrard, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, Richard J. Maynes, Dale E. Miller, Lynn G. Robins, Donald L. Staheli, and Richard E. Turley Sr. were called as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. And all of the Area Authorities were sustained as Area Authority Seventies to serve as members of the newly constituted Third, Fourth, and Fifth Quorums of the Seventy.

Sisters Mary Ellen Wood Smoot, Virginia Urry Jensen, and Sheri L. Dew

were called to succeed Elaine L. Jack, Chieko N. Okasaki, and Aileen H. Clyde as the Relief Society general presidency. Sister Carol Ann Burdett Thomas was sustained to succeed Sister Bonnie D. Parkin as counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

We announce that on May 18, 1997, an Aaronic Priesthood Sesquicentennial Fireside will be broadcast over the Church satellite network at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The singing during this session will be furnished by the Ricks College combined men's choir, under the direction of Brothers Kevin Brower and Steve Grea-son with Brother Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir will now sing "Let the Mountains Shout for Joy," following which Elder Alexander B. Morrison of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

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The choir sang "Let the Mountains Shout for Joy."

Elder Alexander B. Morrison offered the invocation.

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### **President Hinckley**

Thank you, Brother Morrison. The choir will now favor us with "Where Can I Turn for Peace?"

Following the choir number, Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

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The choir sang "Where Can I Turn for Peace?"

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## Elder David B. Haight

### **"Let the mountains shout for joy"**

What a tremendous sight, my brethren. It's thrilling to stand here and look out on this vast audience in the Tabernacle and then think of what is happening throughout the world. The songs that we have just heard, I think, are quite appropriate. "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" (*Hymns*, no. 129)—we could talk about that topic all evening. Before that, we heard the stirring song "Let the Mountains Shout for Joy," written by Evan Stephens. As we reflect upon the sesquicentennial year of our pioneers' arrival, you can imagine the thrill that the Saints must have felt when they sang that song or heard it for the first time. After they had made the trek across the plains and accomplished all that they had done—the suffering and the living in the wagon beds and sleeping out on the ground and walking barefooted and burying the dead out on the prairie—finally to arrive in the valley of the Great Salt Lake, there to establish Zion, you can imagine how they would later sing, "Let the mountains shout for joy! Let the valleys sing."

We can do that now as we reflect upon our ancestors who were part of that trek and all that they have done in making the way for us, and then envision the Church today. As we heard the statistics read today and as we reflect upon what is happening throughout the world regarding the image of the Church, the growth, and the continued expansion of stakes and wards and membership worldwide into new countries, new areas, again we could sing with great enthusiasm, "Let the mountains shout for joy!" Here we are, and the word is spreading the way it has been predicted and the way it should be done.

### **The basics haven't changed**

I'm honored to be able to be on the program here tonight. I'm getting old

enough now that I just about span the 20th century. I'm missing six years of the beginning of the century—I was born in 1906—and I have three years on the other end, which would cover the 100 years. The other day when President Hinckley was talking about a dedication coming up in the year 2000, he said to me, "And I'm planning on your being there." I said, "I'll plan on being there." So if I can make that date, that would close the three on the upper end and I'm only short the six at the beginning. That would give me 94 percent of the 100 years of this century.

Now as I reflect upon the 20th century and what I have learned, I would like to say something to the Aaronic Priesthood, particularly about what I have witnessed and what I have felt during that time.

I would remind all of you that in the year 1906 the population of the Church was about 360,000 people. There were 55 stakes. There were 22 missions. There were some 1,500 missionaries as far as I've been able to calculate, which would mean about 70 missionaries per mission in 22 missions. The work was moving forward that year that I came into existence.

The story was told by my mother that on the morning I was born, on a Sunday, my father was quite proud. He was the bishop of the Oakley First Ward in Oakley, Idaho, and he went outside to announce the birth to one of our Scandinavian friends, Brother Petersen, who was walking by. My father asked him to come in and see the new son. My mother said I was the homeliest little child she had ever seen. I was undernourished, wrinkled, and bald headed. And so Brother Petersen, after looking at me, said, "Sister Haight, do you tink he's worth boddering with?" Well, that was my entrance into the world.

And now from that time I've seen automobiles come into being, and the

first airplanes. I've seen radio develop from a little crystal with a "cat whisker" to tune it, to the beginning of the modern electronics world. I remember that we would sit in the Idaho Power Company at night with a little radio and scratch with that little whisker, and we would get some terrible static. We thought we were tuned in to China because we couldn't understand what was going on.

As I think of the world that I knew when I was young, the basics that we talk about were in place then. With all of the things that I've seen happen since I've lived upon the earth, nothing has come along to change the basics. We now have the great ability to communicate as rapidly as we do and in the various ways that we do. We can travel faster—through the air, in automobiles, and so on—but the basics, the eternal principles, haven't changed a bit.

### **Aaronic Priesthood boys should remember the basics**

Those of you who are young today—and I'm thinking of the deacons who are assembled in meetings throughout the world—I remember when I was ordained a deacon by Bishop Adams. He took the place of my father when he died. My father baptized me, but he wasn't there when I received the Aaronic Priesthood. I remember the thrill that I had when I became a deacon and now held the priesthood, as they explained to me in a simple way and simple language that I had received the power to help in the organization and the moving forward of the Lord's program upon the earth. We receive that as 12-year-old boys. We go through those early ranks of the lesser priesthood—a deacon, a teacher, and then a priest—learning little by little, here a little and there a little, growing in knowledge and wisdom. That little testimony that you start out with begins to grow, and you see it magnifying and you see it building in a way that is under-

standable to you. You can feel the magnitude of it as you start to grow up and prepare for manhood.

Speaking of preparing for manhood, I remember when I was 12 years old. I was the head man around the house. I was a man by the time I was 12 because my mother expected that of me. She was not looked upon as a widow; she was my mother, to raise, to teach, and to train us and to help us prepare for life. And so I would say to the boys in the Aaronic Priesthood, remember the simple, simple basics that we learn from the beginning, that we're taught in the scriptures. Starting with Adam, the basics were upon the earth, and with the development of mankind, and the speed of automobiles or airplanes or communication, none of those gospel basics have changed. They're still in place. We have to be prepared as we move on through life, learning to do the things that are essential for us to advance in the priesthood or advance in positions in society or in whatever it might be, but we have to learn to obey the simple, basic rules of the gospel.

### **The Oakley, Idaho, football team**

As the First Presidency came in tonight, one of them said, "Knock a home run," and someone else said, "Kick a field goal." That reminded me that a few years ago I told a meeting such as this of a football story that I was involved in when the school board in Oakley, Idaho, was able to raise enough money to buy 12 football outfits (see Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 57–58; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 42). We hadn't played football; we'd played basketball because that was easy to do and was cheap and wouldn't require much equipment. But they finally were able to buy 12 uniforms so we'd have a full team and one substitute. Our coach was the chemistry teacher. He had seen a game one time, and so he taught us how to tackle and run up and down



the field and run a few simple plays, but we had never seen an actual team play.

Our first game was to play Twin Falls, Idaho, who the year before had been the state high school champs. We got in the little Ford cars and traveled to Twin Falls. We put on our suits and basketball shoes and went out on the field, all 12 of us, and after we had run around a little loosening up, the band started to play and in came their football team. They had more in their band than we had in our whole high school. But as their team came in in their big Green Bay Packer outfits, we were amazed. There were 39 of them in full uniform.

Well, as you could imagine, the game was interesting. They kicked off to us, and we tried a couple of plays and didn't go anywhere, so we kicked it to get rid of the ball. Each time we would get the ball, we would kick, and each time they would get hold of the ball, they would score. It was an interesting afternoon. Near the end of the game, when we were battered and bloody and beaten, they started to get a little reckless, and Clifford Lee, who was playing halfback with me, had one of their wild passes land right in his arms. He wondered what to do with it. But he saw them coming after him and he started to run. He was not running for points; he was running for his life. He scored a touchdown.

The final score was 106 to 6. The Twin Falls paper just two or three years ago had an article about their great football teams. They listed that game against Oakley, and the score they published in the paper was 106 to 7. I wrote the editor of the paper, and I said, "Dear Editor, I thought you would like to hear from someone who played on the other side." So I described the game to him, and I said, "We didn't try an extra point because we didn't have anyone who could have kicked the extra point. And you should correct the score in your records, because it was 106 to 6."

### **Be clean, obedient, and prepared**

Well, that is part of life and the opportunity we have to be prepared; and when there is something to be done and things to be learned in order to accomplish it, then we have to learn the basics and how to carry them out.

The gospel is true. As I think of the missionary force we have out in the world, my, what a great opportunity to carry out the Lord's work in the way that it must be done. We love you for what you're doing. You boys in the Aaronic Priesthood, be as good as you ought to be and learn to be clean and honest and pure and forthright and obedient—obedient above all things—that you might be able to carry out the Lord's work in the majestic way in which it must be done.

I leave you my love, my witness, my testimony that this work is true; that President Hinckley, who leads the Church today, is our prophet, seer, and revelator; that he is called by the Lord to preside over the Church. I have watched him closely now for more than 20 years, seeing his ability, his talent, his dedication, and the spiritual impact that he brings to the world as he leads this work. This work is true. It will move forward to fill every corner of the earth. People will have an opportunity to hear with their own ears—to hear someone declare that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, which I declare to you. I leave you my love, my witness that this work is true, in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Thank you, Brother Haight; you just keep that up. We appreciate what you have said. We will now hear from Elder Jack H Goasland of the Presidency of the Seventy and the Young Men General President.

## Elder Jack H Goasland

### Ordinary men can do extraordinary tasks

This evening, brethren, I have a strong desire to relate to you an aspect of a well-documented story that is little known in the Church. It involves the courage, the strength of a few young men from the pioneer era; some were priest- or teacher-age like many of you assembled here tonight. These young men willingly made significant sacrifices when they received a call.

As I tell their story, please keep in mind what power it is that unifies us and also connects us to them. The royal priesthood we bear is more than coincidental to this account. Theirs was the same priesthood which today empowers you to perform great and small acts of service to your fellowmen.

Ordinary men—including, and perhaps *especially*, young men—blessed with the privilege of holding the priesthood of God may be called upon to do extraordinary tasks. Holders of the holy priesthood can accomplish mighty feats of heroism, bravery, and service through faith in that sacred power.

The pioneers did not doubt it. They bore frequent witness that the Spirit of the Lord guided and directed them. In confirmation of their testimony, I declare unto you His Spirit is with each of us. He desires to bless and strengthen us. He will make us equal to every righteous task we undertake in His name. He will magnify many times over our own natural ability. You can succeed beyond your own strength *if you learn to rely on the Spirit of the Lord*.

### Rescuing the handcart companies

Now, the story I promised to tell you began before the October 1856 general conference, but that is where we will begin. President Brigham Young stood at

the Old Tabernacle pulpit on this square and issued a call to go rescue the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies. Two days later, about 30 faithful brethren with good mule teams were dispatched to go bring in the handcarts stranded several hundred miles east. Dan W. Jones, a convert of about five years, volunteered.

After arduous effort, the Willie Company finally was found. Caught in the storms of early winter, the Saints were freezing and starving to death. The relief party did all they could to improve conditions, but for some it was simply too late. The morning after the rescuers' arrival, nine of the company were buried in a common grave.

Some of the rescuers were assigned to escort the handcarts to the Salt Lake Valley, but others pushed further eastward in an effort to find the Martin Company. Finally they were found, along with the Hodgett and Hunt Wagon Companies, bogged down and helpless in the snow east of Devil's Gate, Wyoming.

Members of the Martin Company were in dire straits. Their food rations had been cut to a few ounces of flour per day. Only a third of them could walk, and deaths were recorded daily.

The leaders of the rescue party wisely decided to spare no effort in getting the suffering survivors to safety in the Salt Lake Valley. Because of the shortage of space in the wagons, it was necessary to leave most of the handcarts' possessions in storage at Devil's Gate till spring.

### The sacrifice of pioneer young men

Brother Dan W. Jones and two others from the relief party, along with 17 young men from the wagon companies, were called to stay behind to guard the property. They were left to face five winter months in Wyoming, hundreds of

miles from help, with scarcely anything to eat, and under conditions of extreme privation. Imagine the sacrifice! Offers were made to each man to join the wagons bound for the valley, but every one of them chose to stay behind, obedient to the call to serve.

That winter was recorded as one of the most severe ever. The intrepid watchmen struggled to repair the cabins at Devil's Gate; killed the remaining cattle; stored the tough, stringy beef for food; and reconditioned and stacked the goods they were left to protect.

They killed a few buffalo, but the hunting became bad. Soon they were reduced to living on animal hides, from which they scraped off the hair, then boiled the leather. They ate the leather wrappings off the wagon tongues, old moccasin soles, and a well-worn buffalo hide that had been used as a foot mat for two months. At one point Dan Jones was literally preparing to eat his own saddle!

In February of that extreme winter, a member of the Snake Indian tribe visited and helped them. That first night he and two scouts came to camp loaded with good buffalo meat.

### **Inspiration received by Dan Jones**

The winter passed, and finally, early in May, the relief wagons began to roll in. Of the various communications Brother Jones had received, one critical letter from Brigham Young had not arrived. Loading and shipping of the stored goods could not commence without it.

For days they waited, becoming increasingly anxious. Finally Brother Jones sought the Lord in prayer to know how to proceed. He recorded the following testimony: "Next morning without saying anything about the lack of instructions we commenced business. Soon some one asked whose teams were to be loaded first, [and] I dictated to my clerk. Thus we continued. As fast as the

clerk put them down, orders would be given, and we passed on to the next. We continued this [way] for four days. . . . All the teams were loaded up, companies organized and started back [to the valley]" (Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years among the Indians* [1960], 107).

The 17 young men were loaded on the last wagons departing to the Salt Lake Valley, where they would be reunited with their families and loved ones.

Brother Jones arrived later to report to President Young, feeling not a little uncertain how he would be received. Should he have waited for the President's written orders? As everything unfolded, it was learned that President Young had indeed dictated a letter of instructions, which was never received. Dan carefully presented his detailed report. It was a testimony to him to find that the inspiration he'd received in Wyoming was *exactly* the same as in the prophet's letter.

### **More than they could have imagined**

Dan Jones's young men had done more than they ever would have imagined they could:

- They had crossed the plains in wagons and by handcart, mostly on foot.
- They had seen many of their friends and relatives die along the way.
- They had volunteered to spend the winter 300 miles from their destination.
- They had survived a harsh winter with little food and few, if any, comforts.
- They had heeded the call of the prophet to serve their fellow Saints.
- They had endured to the end nobly and were blessed for their efforts.

I repeat, brethren: Ordinary men, blessed with the privilege of holding the priesthood of God, may be called upon to do extraordinary tasks and accomplish mighty feats through faith in that sacred power!

## We can perform mighty miracles

One of my Book of Mormon heroes, Ammon, the great son of Mosiah, explains how much two people can accomplish when one of them is the Lord: "Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things; yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land, for which we will praise his name forever" (Alma 26:12).

To you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood and to you brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood, I witness that we *can* perform "many mighty miracles," as testified by Ammon and by Dan Jones! They took the Lord as their guide, listened to and obeyed the Holy Spirit, and learned that they could indeed perform mighty miracles, which thing they never had supposed.

Our own challenges in this day will be great. Our needs will be significant.

Our loyalty to great gospel truths must be no less valiant than that of those young men over 140 years ago.

It is my prayer, brethren, that each of us will make the Lord—and His revealed word through His servants, the prophets—the guiding influence in our lives. Each of us has a miracle to perform, a journey to complete, and a marvelous mission to fulfill.

May Heavenly Father bless you to know that you are one of His chosen sons in a blessed and royal generation, and that He has mighty miracles for *you* to perform. With His strength and the guidance of the Spirit, you too can do all things! To which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Hinckley

We have just listened to Elder Jack H. Goaslind of the Seventy. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

## President James E. Faust

### Priesthood is the greatest power

My dear brethren, I prayerfully seek your faith as I undertake the overwhelming responsibility of addressing this great body of priesthood holders. May I express my profound appreciation for your loyalty, faithfulness, and devotion. The work of God our Father goes forward as never before because of your commitment and devotion to this holy work.

Brethren, we must never let the great powers of the holy priesthood of God lie dormant in us. We are bound together in the greatest cause and the most sacred work in all the world. To exercise these great powers, we must be clean in thought and action. We must do nothing

which would impair the full exercise of this transcendent power.

Priesthood is the greatest power on earth. Worlds were created by and through the priesthood. To safeguard this sacred power, all priesthood holders act under the direction of those who hold the keys of the priesthood. These keys bring order into our lives and into the organization of the Church. For us, priesthood power is the power and authority delegated by God to act in His name for the salvation of His children. Caring for others is the very essence of priesthood responsibility. It is the power to bless, to heal, and to administer the saving ordinances of the gospel. Righteous priesthood authority is most

needed within the walls of our own homes. It must be exercised in great love. This is true of all priesthood holders—deacon, teacher, priest, elder, high priest, patriarch, Seventy, and Apostle.

### **Serving as a junior home teaching companion**

I first learned the principle of priesthood caring from my own father and grandfather, but I have also seen it manifested by thousands of worthy men. I learned great lessons of priesthood caring as a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood. I was assigned to serve as a junior home teaching companion to a great Scandinavian immigrant named Algot Johnson from Malmo, Sweden. I learned to admire everything about him, including his endearing Swedish accent. He taught me the true meaning of the Lord's instruction to the teachers:

"The teacher's duty is to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them;

"And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

"And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty."<sup>1</sup>

Brother Johnson had paid a great price to leave his beloved Sweden and come to the United States. He was very dedicated. Despite the difference in our ages, we became lifelong friends. When he became our ward Sunday School superintendent, he asked for me to be his counselor. I was only 17 years of age. He was a successful contractor, and when I returned home from World War II, he built my first home. When I graduated from law school, I did legal work for him, and when I billed him for my legal services, he paid me more than I asked. That did not happen very often. I cite this experience to emphasize the importance of giving every Aaronic Priesthood

holder the opportunity to serve as a junior companion to faithful Melchizedek Priesthood holders.

### **Lessons learned from visiting a shut-in**

The duty of home teachers cannot always be satisfied with a once-a-month visit. They need to be caring and willing to serve as the need arises. I know of members of one high priests group who take tools when they go home teaching. We do not expect home teachers to be able to fix everything, such as computers and other highly technical equipment. They can, however, offer their wisdom and experience in assisting their assigned families to find the needed help. Caring home teachers should make appointments in advance, if possible. Aaronic Priesthood home teaching companions can learn lifelong lessons and be greatly blessed by serving with faithful Melchizedek Priesthood senior companions. Brother Robert F. Jex shares his faith-strengthening experience as a junior home teaching companion many years ago:

"My legs felt like gelatin and there was a knot in my stomach as we approached the door. I was sure that I was going to faint as my [home teaching] companion told me that this was my door.

" . . . I was a 15-year-old home teacher climbing the stairs to the apartment of Sister Rice, a widow living in the Bountiful (Utah) First Ward. Don Gabbott, my companion, was to teach me a great lesson that night about the nurturing role of priesthood bearers to shut-ins who are cut off from the mainstream of Church activity.

"Brother Gabbott had given me a topic to present to the five families assigned us, and I was frightened. . . . I [had] prepared . . . some notes on a paper, but I was unsure of how to take the lead in the presence of a high priest.

"The response to our knocking was slow. . . . I was about to suggest that no one was home. Then the shrunken figure of a frail, aged sister, came around a corner in the hallway. She seemed uncertain of what waited her answer at the door. Her face brightened as she recognized Brother Gabbott. We were invited into her living room and asked to take a seat.

"After a short greeting, Brother Gabbott looked at me as if to say, 'Okay, Bob, it's time to give our message.' The knot in my stomach tightened as I began to speak. I cannot recall what I said—it doesn't really matter—for I was the pupil in the classroom of priesthood duty and responsibility. As I glanced up from my notes at the conclusion of my remarks, my eyes fell upon the tear-stained cheeks of that sweet, sensitive sister. She expressed her gratitude for the presence of priesthood bearers in her humble home.

"I was speechless. . . . What had I said that had been so profound? What could I do? Fortunately, Brother Gabbott came to my rescue by bearing his testimony and asking if there were any needs in the home. There were.

"Sister Rice said that she had not been feeling well and asked that she be remembered as we offered our prayer before leaving. She then turned to me and asked if I would offer that prayer. By that time, I was so overcome by the spirit of the occasion . . . [and] surprised that I was asked to pray when someone older and more experienced and trusted was present. Automatically, I consented and offered a benediction upon that home teaching visit, asking that a special blessing of health and strength be given to that faithful sister whom I barely knew but quickly came to love and respect.

"Twenty-five years have passed since my introduction to home teaching in the home of Sister Rice, and she has long since passed away. But I cannot

pass that orange-brick fourplex on Bountiful's Main Street without thinking about the experience provided by Brother Gabbott and a faithful sister who knew the appropriateness of calling upon the powers of heaven embodied in an obedient high priest and an insecure, frightened teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood."<sup>2</sup>

### Counsel to bishops

I wish to say a word to our faithful and devoted bishops. I recently reread in the *Melchizedek Priesthood Leadership Handbook* the responsibilities of the bishop. These responsibilities are heavy and often quite demanding. Some duties the bishop cannot delegate, but others can and should be handled by his counselors, fathers, home teachers, and quorum leaders. Many years ago we were taught by President Harold B. Lee a fuller meaning of the direction from the Lord: "Let every man stand in his own office, and labor in his own calling."<sup>3</sup> He said: "It becomes the responsibility of those of us who lead to *let*, to *permit*, to *give opportunity* for every man to learn his duty. . . . Help is not helpful if we assume the prerogatives that belong to that individual."<sup>4</sup> This fuller understanding also means that presiding officers of the Church should be careful not to usurp the responsibilities and duties of those they are called to direct.

Bishops, as you serve in this great calling, you may be able to influence more lives for good than at any other time in your life. While you are enjoying the mantle of a bishop and presiding high priest, you will have special spiritual endowments of wisdom, insight, and inspiration concerning the welfare of your people. As president of the Aaronic Priesthood and of the priests quorum, you have particular interest and concern for the youth, both boys and girls.

### **Safety in sustaining our leaders**

I have discussed the duty of priesthood leaders and members to care for their families, quorums, wards, and stakes. I should like now to discuss another aspect of priesthood responsibility, which is our privilege to sustain those in authority over us. Wilford Woodruff recorded a remarkable account which illustrates the importance of this responsibility.

In the early days of the Church, President Brigham Young asked Wilford Woodruff to take his family to Boston and gather the Saints from New England and Canada and send them to Zion. With a company of 100, they arrived at Pittsburgh at sundown. Brother Woodruff recorded:

"We did not want to stay there, so I went to the first steamboat that was going to leave. I saw the captain and engaged passage for us on that steamer. I had only just done so when the spirit said to me, . . . 'Don't go aboard that steamer, nor your company.' Of course, I went and spoke to the captain, and told him [that] I had made up my mind to wait.

"Well, that ship started, and had only got five miles down the river when it took fire, and three hundred persons were burned to death or drowned."

What if the Saints had not followed the counsel of Wilford Woodruff? All wisely chose to be obedient. Had they not done so, they would have perished.

In my lifetime, there have been very few occasions when I questioned the wisdom and inspiration given by key priesthood leaders. I have always tried to follow their counsel, whether I agreed with it or not. I have come to know that most of the time they were in tune with the Spirit and I was not. The safe course is to sustain our priesthood leaders and let God judge their actions.

In the early days of the Church, many fell away because they would not sustain Joseph Smith as the Lord's

anointed. In fact, the Prophet Joseph said of some of the leaders in Kirtland that "there have been but two but what have lifted their heel against me—namely Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball."<sup>6</sup> Because of their faithful loyalty, the Lord called Brigham Young to lead the Church west, and when the First Presidency was reorganized, Heber C. Kimball was called as First Counselor to Brigham Young.

I do not speak of blind obedience, but rather the obedience of faith, which supports and sustains decisions with confidence that they are inspired. I advocate being more in tune with the Spirit so we may feel a confirming witness of the truthfulness of the direction we receive from our priesthood leaders. There is great safety and peace in supporting our priesthood leaders in their decisions.

### **Prepare for priesthood service**

The priesthood of this Church carries the responsibility to help move the work of righteousness in all the world. Priesthood service requires us to set aside our selfish interests and desires. Brethren, we need to prepare so that we are able to accept priesthood callings should they come. We should try to live providently with respect to our personal lifestyles. Living providently means living well within our means and providing for future needs and events. We should avoid the bondage of crushing, unnecessary indebtedness. We should also try to have some savings to tide us over for a rainy day. In short, we should seek to manage our affairs so that we are better able to accept the calls which might come to us now, as well as in the future.

### **Righteousness necessary for priesthood power**

You young men need to understand that this greatest of all powers, the priesthood power, is not accessed the

way power is used in the world. It cannot be bought or sold. In the book of Acts, we learn that a man called Simon wanted to buy the priesthood power of the Apostles to lay on hands and bestow the Holy Ghost. "But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."<sup>7</sup> Many of you watch and admire linebackers, power forwards, and centers, as well as those who wield wealth, fame, and political and military power. Worldly power often is employed ruthlessly. However, priesthood power is invoked only through those principles of righteousness by which the priesthood is governed. The Lord has said:

"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

"By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile. . . .

"Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven."<sup>8</sup>

We are told that "many are called, but few are chosen."<sup>9</sup> One who is chosen is one who is the object of divine favor.<sup>10</sup> Brethren, how may we be chosen? We may be chosen only when we are chosen by God. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it [to] you."<sup>11</sup> This happens only when the heart and soul are transformed, when we have striven with all our heart, might, mind, and soul to keep all of the commandments of God. It happens when we have kept "the

oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood."<sup>12</sup> Thus, we may "become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God."<sup>13</sup>

### Priesthood is a marvelous blessing

President Stephen L. Richards, a former Counselor in the First Presidency, said, "I have reached the conclusion in my own mind that no man, however great his intellectual attainments, however vast and far-reaching his service may be, arrives at the full measure of his sonship and the manhood the Lord intended him to have, without the investiture of the Holy Priesthood, and with that appreciation, my brethren, I have given thanks to the Lord all my life for this marvelous blessing which has come to me—a blessing that some of my progenitors had, and a blessing which more than any other heritage I want my sons and my grandsons and my great-grandsons to enjoy."<sup>14</sup>

Brethren, may we strive to keep the oath and covenant of the priesthood and qualify for and receive all of the supernatural blessings God has for His faithful sons, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53–55.
2. "My First Door," *New Era*, May 1989, 27.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:109.
4. In Regional Representatives' Seminar Addresses, 4–5 Apr. 1973, 4, 14; Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
5. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham (1990), 294–95.
6. *History of the Church*, 5:412.
7. Acts 8:20.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42, 45.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 121:40.
10. See *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. [1993], "chosen," 203.



11. John 15:16.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 84:39.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 84:34.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1955, 88.

### President Hinckley

Thank you, President Faust. The choir and congregation will now join in

singing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord." Following that, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will speak to us.

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The choir and congregation sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### "If you build it, [they] will come"

Several years ago an unusual motion picture swept the theaters in this and in other lands. It was entitled *Field of Dreams* and was the story of a young man who revered the baseball players of his youth and, from this foundation, carved out a large section from his cornfield and located there a full-blown baseball diamond. People mocked his foolishness and ridiculed his lack of common sense. The film goes on to show the many challenges he faced in completing the project and readying the baseball diamond for view. His was not an easy task. During the period of doubt as to the future success of his dream, he was driven by the reassuring words, "If you build it, [they] will come." And come they did. Travelers by the thousands visited this unique place, which was filled with baseball's many memories.

### Missionaries build bridges

Lately, I have reflected on the importance of building a bridge to the heart of a person. I think of the nearly 55,000 full-time missionaries from our faith who are assigned over much of the world with the divine commission to teach, to testify, and to baptize. Theirs is a bridge-building task, awesome to behold and somewhat overwhelming to contemplate. With

God's mandate ringing in their ears, with the Lord's instruction penetrating their hearts, they move forward in their lofty callings. They ponder the Lord's words:

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God."<sup>1</sup>

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."<sup>2</sup>

Last year was the centennial of Utah statehood, and many ambassadors from other countries made a visit to our state capitol and also to the Church Administration Building. Many also toured the Missionary Training Center at Provo, Utah. They visited the classes of learning; they heard the testimonies of those going to their respective fields of labor. They marveled at the language proficiency, faith, and love exhibited by the missionaries. One ambassador stated, "I observed a sense of purpose, a commitment to prepare and to serve, and a joyful heart in each missionary."

These missionaries go forward with faith. They know their duty. They understand that they are a vital link for the persons they will meet as missionaries and in the teaching and testifying they

will experience as they bring others to the truth of the gospel.

They yearn for more persons to teach. They pray for the essential help each member can give to the conversion process.

### **The covenant of baptism**

The decision to change one's life and come unto Christ is, perhaps, the most important decision of mortality. Such a dramatic change is taking place daily throughout the world.

Alma chapter 5, verse 13, describes this personal miracle: "And behold, . . . a mighty change was . . . wrought in their hearts, and they humbled themselves and put their trust in the true and living God."

The covenant of baptism spoken of by Alma causes all of us to probe the depths of our souls:

"Now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light;

"Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places . . .

"Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?"

### **Share the truth**

Our studies reveal that most of those who embrace the message of the missionaries have had other exposures to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—perhaps hearing the magnificent Tabernacle Choir perform, maybe reading and viewing press reports of our

well-traveled President Gordon B. Hinckley and his skillful participation in broad-ranging interviews, or just knowing another person who is a member and for whom respect exists. We, as members, should be at our best. Our lives should reflect the teachings of the gospel and our hearts and voices ever be ready to share the truth.

### **Fellowship investigators**

Fellowshipping of the investigator should begin well before baptism. The teachings of the missionaries often need the second witness of a new convert to the Church. It has been my experience that such a witness, borne from the heart of one who has undergone this mighty change himself, brings resolve and commitment. When I served as mission president in eastern Canada, we found that in Toronto, as well as in most of the cities of Ontario and Quebec, there was no dearth of willing helpers to accompany the missionaries and to fellowship the investigators, welcome them to meetings, and introduce them to the ward or branch officers and members. Fellowship, friendship, and reactivating are ongoing in the daily life of a Latter-day Saint.

### **Give callings to new converts**

Each new convert should be provided a calling in the Church. Such brings interest, stability, and growth. The task may be somewhat simple, such as that given to Jacob de Jager when he and his family became members in Toronto. He held lofty posts in business, but his first calling in the Church was to put the hymnbooks in place along the pews. He took his assignment seriously. In recollecting this first calling, he said, "I had to be present each week, or the hymnbooks would remain undistributed." As you know, Elder de Jager later served many years as a member of the

First Quorum of the Seventy. Though he had many demanding responsibilities as a General Authority, he never forgot his first calling in the Church.

### **Miraculous conversions**

The unseen hand of the Lord guides the efforts of those who strive to learn and live the truth of the gospel. As a mission president, I received a weekly letter from each missionary. One that pleased me greatly came from a young elder serving in Hamilton. He and his companion were working with a lovely family, a young couple with two children. The couple felt that the message was true, and they could not deny their desire to be baptized. The wife, however, worried about her mother and father in faraway western Canada, fearing she and her husband would be disowned by her parents for joining the Church. She took pen in hand and jotted a note to her parents in Vancouver. The note read something like this:

"Dear Mother and Father,

"I want to thank you with all of my heart for your kindness and for your understanding and for the teachings which you gave me in my youth. John and I have come across a great truth, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We have studied the discussions, and our baptism will take place next Saturday night. We hope you will understand. In fact, we hope that you will welcome the missionaries in your home as we welcomed them in ours."

The letter was sealed with a tear, a stamp was affixed, and it was mailed to Vancouver. On the very day it was received in Vancouver, the couple in Hamilton received a letter from the wife's mother and father. They wrote:

"We are far away from you, or we would surely talk to you in person. We want you to know that missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have called at our home, and

we cannot deny the validity of their message. We have set a date for our baptism to take place next week. We hope you will understand and not be unduly critical of our decision. This gospel means so much to us and has brought such happiness into our lives that we pray someday you might also agree to learn more about it."

Can you imagine what happened when the couple in Hamilton received that letter from the wife's parents? They phoned Mother and Dad, and there were many tears of joy shed. I am sure there was a long-distance embrace, for both families became members of the Church.

You see, our Heavenly Father knows who we are, His sons and His daughters. He wants to bring into our lives the blessings for which we qualify, and He can do it. He can accomplish anything.

### **White carnations for new members**

A visible and tender act of fellowship was witnessed in the ancient city of Rome. Some years ago, Sister Monson and I met with over 500 members there in a district conference. The presiding officer at that time was Leopoldo Larcher, a wonderful Italian. His brother had been working as a guest employee in the auto plants in Germany when two missionaries taught him the gospel. He went back to Italy and taught the gospel to his brother. Leopoldo accepted and sometime later became the president of the Italy Rome Mission and then the Italy Catania Mission.

During that meeting, I noticed that in the throng were many who were wearing a white carnation. I said to Leopoldo, "What is the significance of the white carnation?"

He said, "Those are new members. We provide a white carnation to every member who has been baptized since our last district conference. Then all the members and the missionaries know that

these people are especially to be fellowshipped."

I watched those new members being embraced, being greeted, being spoken to. They were no more strangers nor foreigners; they were "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God."<sup>4</sup>

### **Spare no effort in reactivation**

Beyond the new convert to the Church are some who have drifted from that pathway which upward leads and, for one reason or another, have become less active for months, even years. Perhaps they were not fellowshipped; maybe friends departed from their lives. Whatever the reason, the fact remains: We need them, and they need us. Missionaries can effectively visit the homes where these individuals reside. When they approach, those within the shelter of home may come to remember the glorious feelings which came over them when they first heard the principles of the gospel taught to them. The missionaries can teach such individuals and witness the changes which come into their lives as they return to activity.

They need friends with testimonies. They need to know that we truly care for the one.

Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers and Young Women teachers are on the line of battle, and miracles are within their grasp. Who is the teacher you best remember from your youth? I would guess that in all probability it was the one who knew your name, who welcomed you to class, who was interested in you as a person, and who truly cared. When a leader walks the pathway of mortality with a precious youth alongside, there develops a bond of commitment between the two that shields the youth from the temptations of sin and keeps him or her walking steadfastly on the path that leads onward, upward, and unswervingly to eternal life. Build a bridge to each youth.

All of us here and abroad this evening must answer the call of our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, to spare no effort in fellowshipping and reactivating those who need our help, our labors, and our testimonies.

### **Reactivation efforts in two stakes**

Let me share with you visits to two stake conferences where I evidenced the miracle which can take place when we take to heart the words of the pioneer hymn "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel."<sup>5</sup>

One visit was to the Millcreek stake in Salt Lake City some years ago. Just over 100 brethren who were prospective elders had been ordained elders during the preceding year. I asked President James Clegg the secret of his success. He was too modest to take the credit. His counselor revealed that President Clegg, recognizing the challenge, had undertaken to personally call and arrange a private appointment between him and each prospective elder. During the appointment, President Clegg would mention the temple of the Lord, the saving ordinances and covenants emphasized there, and would conclude with this question: "Wouldn't you desire to take your sweet wife and your children to the house of the Lord, that you might be a forever family throughout all eternity?" An acknowledgment followed, the reactivation process was pursued, and the goal was obtained.

The other visit was to the North Carbon stake in Price, Utah, also many years ago. I noted during my visit that they had rescued 86 men from the prospective elders in one year and had taken them and their wives to the Manti Temple. I said to Cecil Broadbent, the president, "How did you do it, President?"

He said, "I didn't. My counselor, President Judd, did."

President Judd was a large, ruddy-faced Welsh coal miner. I said to him,

"President Judd, will you tell me how you were able to rescue 86 brethren in one year?"

I sat anticipating his answer, and he said, "No!"

I was stunned. I'd never had anyone say *no* so directly in my life. I asked, "Why not?"

He said, "Then you'll tell the other stake presidents you visit, and we won't lead the Church in reactivation." He was smiling, though, so I knew it was half in jest. He said, "I'll make a deal with you, Brother Monson. I'll tell you how we rescued 86 men in one year if you'll get me two tickets to general conference."

I said, "You're on!" And so he told me. What he didn't tell me is that he intended to collect interest every conference for the next 10 years. He came faithfully every six months for his two tickets.

In both the Millcreek and the North Carbon stakes, as well as in others which have been successful in this phase of the work, four principles have prevailed:

1. The reactivation opportunity was handled at the ward level.
2. The bishop of the ward was involved.
3. Qualified and inspired teachers were provided.
4. Attention was given to each individual.

In building a bridge to the investigator, the new convert, or the less-active member, when we do our part the Lord does His. I testify concerning this truth.

### Turning point in a priest's life

When I served as a bishop, I noted one Sunday morning that one of our priests was missing from priesthood meeting. I left the quorum in the care of the adviser and visited Richard's home. His mother said he was working at the West Temple Garage.

I drove to the garage in search of Richard and looked everywhere, but I

could not find him. Suddenly I had the inspiration to gaze down into the old-fashioned grease pit situated at the side of the station. From the darkness I could see two shining eyes. Then I heard Richard say, "You found me, Bishop! I'll come up." After that he rarely missed a priesthood meeting.

The family moved to a nearby stake. Time passed, and I received a phone call informing me that Richard had been called to serve a mission in Mexico, and I was invited by the family to speak at his farewell testimonial. At the meeting, when Richard responded, he mentioned that the turning point in his determination to fill a mission came one Sunday morning—not in the chapel, but as he gazed up from the depths of a dark grease pit and found his quorum president's outstretched hand.

Through the years, Richard has stayed in touch with me, telling of his testimony, his family, and his faithful service in the Church, including his calling as a bishop.

My beloved brethren, let us, with faith unwavering and with love unstinting, be bridge builders to the hearts of those with whom we labor. As in the movie *Field of Dreams*, if we build it, they will come. Of this truth I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
2. Matthew 28:19–20.
3. Mosiah 18:8–10.
4. Ephesians 2:19.
5. "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel," *Hymns*, no. 252.

### President Hinckley

We have just listened to President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

We remind each of you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The

Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. We encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you go to bed this evening.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We express our deep appreciation to the Ricks College men's choir for the inspiring music this evening. Following my remarks, they will conclude by singing "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

The benediction will be offered by Elder Augusto A. Lim of the Seventy, who is president of the Manila Philippines Temple.

Now if I may, I will speak to you for a few minutes.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Urgent need to fellowship converts

I endorse that which has been said this evening. I hope that you have listened well and taken note.

President Monson has spoken on retaining the convert. I endorse what he has said and wish to speak somewhat further on this same subject. I feel very strongly about it.

Each year a substantial number of people become members of the Church, largely through missionary efforts. Last year there were 321,385 converts comprised of men, women, and children. This is a large enough number—and then some—in one single year to constitute 100 new stakes of Zion. One hundred new stakes per year. Think of it! This places upon each of us an urgent and pressing need to fellowship those who join our ranks.

It is not an easy thing to become a member of this Church. In most cases it involves setting aside old habits, leaving old friends and associations, and stepping into a new society which is different and somewhat demanding.

With the ever increasing number of converts, we must make an increasingly substantial effort to assist them as they find their way. Every one of them needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with "the good word of

God" (Moroni 6:4). It is our duty and opportunity to provide these things.

### Striving to rekindle a convert's faith

To illustrate, I think I would like to share with you one of my failures. I suppose some people think I have never experienced failure. I have. Let me tell you of one such instance.

Sixty-three years ago, while serving as a missionary in the British Isles, my companion and I taught, and it was my pleasure to baptize, a young man. He was well educated. He was refined. He was studious. I was so proud of this gifted young man who had come into the Church. I felt he had all of the qualifications someday to become a leader among our people.

He was in the course of making the big adjustment from convert to member. For a short period before I was released, mine was the opportunity to be his friend. Then I was released to return home. He was given a small responsibility in the branch in London. He knew nothing of what was expected of him. He made a mistake. The head of the organization where he served was a man I can best describe as being short on love and strong on criticism. In a rather unmerciful way, he went after my friend who had made the simple mistake.

The young man left our rented hall that night smarting and hurt by his superior officer. He said to himself, "If that is the kind of people they are, then I am not going back."

He drifted into inactivity. The years passed. The war came on, and he served in the British forces. His first wife died. After the war he married a woman whose father was a Protestant minister. That did not help his belief.

When I was in England, I tried desperately to find him. His file contained no record of a current address. I came home and finally, after a long search, was able to track him down.

I wrote to him. He responded but with no mention of the gospel.

When next I was in London, I again searched for him. The day I was to leave, I found him. I called him, and we met in the underground station. He threw his arms around me as I did around him. I had very little time before I had to catch my plane, but we talked briefly and with what I think was a true regard for one another. He gave me another embrace before I left. I determined that I would never lose track of him again. Through the years I wrote to him, letters that I hoped would give encouragement and incentive to return to the Church. He wrote in reply without mentioning the Church.

The years passed. I grew older as did he. He retired from his work and moved to Switzerland. On one occasion when I was in Switzerland, I went out of my way to find the village where he lived. We spent the better part of a day together—he, his wife, my wife, and myself. We had a wonderful time, but it was evident that the fire of faith had long since died. I tried every way I knew, but I could not find a way to rekindle it. I continued my correspondence. I sent him books, magazines, recordings of the Tabernacle Choir, and other things, for which he expressed appreciation.

He died a few months ago. His wife wrote me to inform me of this. She said, "You were the best friend he ever had."

Tears coursed my cheeks when I read that letter. I knew I had failed. Perhaps if I had been there to pick him up when he was first knocked down, he might have made a different thing of his life. I think I could have helped him then. I think I could have dressed the wound from which he suffered. I have only one comfort: I tried. I have only one sorrow: I failed.

The challenge now is greater than it has ever been because the number of converts is greater than we have ever before known. A program for retaining and strengthening the convert will soon go out to all the Church. I plead with you, brethren; I ask of you, each of you, to become a part of this great effort. Every convert is precious. Every convert is a son or daughter of God. Every convert is a great and serious responsibility.

### **Converts should be remembered and nourished**

Moroni, long ago, spoke of these people with whom we deal in this day and time. Said he:

"Neither did they receive any unto baptism save they came forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and witnessed unto the church that they truly repented of all their sins.

"And none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end" (Moroni 6:2-3).

I believe, my brethren, that these converts have a testimony of the gospel. I believe they have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and know of His divine reality. I believe they have truly repented of their sins and have a determination to serve the Lord.

Moroni continues concerning them after they are baptized: "And after they had been received unto baptism, and

were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith" (Moroni 6:4).

In these days as in those days, converts are "numbered among the people of the church . . . [to] be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer." Brethren, let us help them as they take their first steps as members.

### **Everyone can help in this work**

This is a work for everyone. It is a work for home teachers and visiting teachers. It is a work for the bishopric, for the priesthood quorums, for the Relief Society, the young men and young women, even the Primary.

I was in a fast and testimony meeting only last Sunday. A 15- or 16-year-old boy stood before the congregation and said that he had decided to be baptized.

Then one by one, boys of the teachers quorum stepped to the microphone to express their love for him, to tell him that he was doing the right thing, and to assure him that they would stand with him and help him. It was a wonderful experience to hear those young men speak words of appreciation and encouragement to their friend. I am satisfied that all of those boys, including the one who was baptized last week, will go on missions.

### **Nothing of greater importance**

In a recent press interview I was asked, "What brings you the greatest sat-

isfaction as you see the work of the Church today?"

My response: "The most satisfying experience I have is to see what this gospel does for people. It gives them a new outlook on life. It gives them a perspective that they have never felt before. It raises their sights to things noble and divine. Something happens to them that is miraculous to behold. They look to Christ and come alive."

Now, brethren, I ask each of you to please help in this undertaking. Your friendly ways are needed. Your sense of responsibility is needed. The Savior of all mankind left the ninety and nine to find the one lost. That one who was lost need not have become lost. But if he is out there somewhere in the shadows, and if it means leaving the ninety and nine, we must do so to find him. (See Luke 15:3-7.)

Now, I think that is all I will say this evening about this, except to say that in my view nothing is of greater importance.

### **Paul's counsel to young men**

I now wish to move to another subject.

I wish to speak to the young men. I have as my text Paul's letters to his young friend and associate Timothy. I have quoted from these letters extensively to missionaries, and now I speak to you as missionaries yet to be.

I picture Paul as the old, battered teacher of truth. He writes to his young friend, in whom he has confidence and for whom he has a great love.

He says, among other things, "We both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (1 Timothy 4:10).

Paul was persecuted and driven; he was hated and despised. Eventually his life was taken because he fearlessly bore witness of the Redeemer of all men.



We must be prepared to do likewise.

As Nephi proclaimed, "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

### **Be an example and speak truth**

Writes Paul further to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Those whom we teach will overlook our youth if in our conversations in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in the purity of our lives, we reflect the Spirit of Christ. We cannot indulge in swearing. We cannot be guilty of profanity; we cannot indulge in impure thoughts, words, and acts and have the Spirit of the Lord with us.

Paul goes on to say, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (1 Timothy 4:14).

Who are the presbytery? They are the elders of the Church. Each of you deacons, teachers, and priests has been ordained by one having the proper authority, in most cases by your fathers or bishops. You have been given a great and precious gift. You can speak truth. You must speak truth. You can bear testimony of the great and good things of the gospel. This is your gift. Neglect it not!

Paul continues, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16).

As you work with your associates to help them with their faith, you will save them and also yourselves.

### **Keep yourselves pure**

Again Paul's counsel to Timothy: "Keep thyself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22).

Those are simple words. But they are ever so important. Paul is saying, in effect, stay away from those things which will tear you down and destroy you spiritually. Stay away from television shows which lead to unclean thoughts and unclean language. Stay away from videos which will lead to evil thoughts. They won't help you. They will only hurt you. Stay away from books and magazines which are sleazy and filthy in what they say and portray. Keep thyself pure.

### **The love of money can destroy you**

Continuing with the words of Paul: "For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). It is the love of money and the love of those things which money can buy which destroys us. We all need money to supply our needs. But it is the love of it which hurts us, which warps our values, which leads us away from spiritual things and fosters selfishness and greed.

### **Do not be ashamed of your testimony**

And now I come to Paul's great statement:

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Timothy 1:7-8).

It is not God who has given us the spirit of fear; this comes from the adversary. So many of us are fearful of what our peers will say, that we will be looked upon with disdain and criticized if we stand for what is right. But I remind you that "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). Evil never was happiness. Sin never was happiness. Happiness lies

in the power and the love and the sweet simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We need not be prudish. We need not slink off in a corner, as it were. We need not be ashamed. We have the greatest thing in the world, the gospel of the risen Lord. Paul gives us a mandate: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Timothy 1:8).

As deacons, teachers, and priests ordained to the holy priesthood, we can stand tall and, without equivocation or fear, declare our testimony of Jesus Christ.

### **Turn away from youthful lusts**

Further from Paul: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed" (2 Timothy 2:15).

If we were called upon to stand before God and give an accounting of ourselves, could we do it without embarrassment? This is Paul's great plea to his young friend. It is his plea to each of you. He goes on to say, "Shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness" (2 Timothy 2:16).

He is warning against just fooling around, wasting our time, talking about useless things. Idleness leads to evil.

He continues, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

It was Sir Galahad who said, "My strength is as the strength of ten, / Because my heart is pure" (Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Sir Galahad*).

We cannot say it frequently enough. Turn away from youthful lusts. Stay away from drugs. They can absolutely destroy you. Avoid them as you would a terrible disease, for that is what they become. Avoid foul and filthy talk. It can lead to destruction. Be absolutely honest. Dishonesty can corrupt and destroy.

Observe the Word of Wisdom. You cannot smoke; you must not smoke. You must not chew tobacco. You cannot drink liquor. You hold the priesthood of God. You must rise above these things which beckon with a seductive call. Be prayerful. Call on the Lord in faith, and He will hear your prayers. He loves you. He wishes to bless you. He will do so if you live worthy of His blessing.

### **Become educated and prepare for a mission**

You face great challenges that lie ahead. You are moving into a world of fierce competition. You must get all of the education you can. The Lord has instructed us concerning the importance of education. It will qualify you for greater opportunities. It will equip you to do something worthwhile in the great world of opportunity that lies ahead. If you can go to college and that is your wish, then do it. If you have no desire to attend college, then go to a vocational or business school to sharpen your skills and increase your capacity.

Prepare now to go on a mission. It will not be a burden. It will not be a waste of time. It will be a great opportunity and a great challenge. It will do something for you that nothing else will do for you. It will sharpen your skills. It will train you in leadership. It will bring testimony and conviction into your heart. You will bless the lives of others as you bless your own. It will bring you nearer to God and to His Divine Son as you bear witness and testimony of Him. Your knowledge of the gospel will strengthen and deepen. Your love for your fellowman will increase. Your fears will fade as you stand boldly in testimony of the truth.

### **Be faithful and true**

We love you, boys, our dear young associates in this great work. We pray

for you that you may be faithful and true. We count on you to prepare yourselves to take our places in the great work of moving forward the work of God. Get on your knees and pray every day, night and morning. Look to your fathers and mothers, and follow their counsel. Look to your bishop and his counselors. They will lead you in the direction you should go. "Look to God and live" (Alma 37:47).

You have come into the world in a great season in this the work of the Lord. No other generation has had quite the same opportunities that you have and will have. Begin now to establish those goals which will bring you happiness—education in your chosen skill or branch of learning, whatever it may be; a

mission in which to surrender yourself entirely to the Lord to do His work; future marriage in the house of the Lord to a wonderful and delightful companion of whom you will be worthy because of the way you have lived.

May the Lord bless you, my dear young friends. May His watch care be over you to preserve and protect and guide you. He has a great work for you. Do not fail Him. I leave my love and my blessing with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

Elder Augusto A. Lim offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 167th Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 6, 1997. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 167th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle; in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Henry B. Eyring, Charles Didier, and V. Dallas Merrell are seated on the stand; and in the

Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders F. Enzo Busche, Ronald E. Poelman, David E. Sorensen, and Lance B. Wickman are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together. We are especially grateful to have with us this morning Dr. Anatoly Lashinski, chairman of the committee setting Russian policy for religious organizations, reporting directly to President Yeltsin.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, opened these services by singing "The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee."

The choir will now sing "O Thou, Before the World Began," following which Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy, who is president of the Tokyo Temple, will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "O Thou, Before the World Began."

Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi offered the invocation.

### President Hinckley

Our first speaker this morning will be President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

## President Thomas S. Monson

This year, 1997, commemorates the 150th anniversary since the pioneers, under the inspired leadership of Brigham Young, entered the valley of the Great Salt Lake and proclaimed: "This is the right place. Drive on."<sup>1</sup> Much will be said at this conference concerning that epochal event, and thanks will be given to God for His watchful care and guidance.

### Tribute to "other pioneers"

On this beautiful Sabbath morning I wish to make a few remarks concerning "other pioneers" who preceded that trek. In doing so, I pause and ponder the dictionary definition of the word *pioneer*: "one who goes before, [showing] others [the way] to follow."<sup>2</sup>

### Pioneers from the Bible

Let us turn back the clock of time and journey to other places, that we might review several who I feel meet the high standard of the word *pioneer*.

Such a one was Moses. Raised in Pharaoh's court and learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, he became mighty in words and deeds. One cannot separate Moses, the great lawgiver, from the tablets of stone provided him by God and on which were written the Ten Commandments. They were binding then; they are binding now.

Moses endured constant frustration as some of his trusted followers returned to their previous ways. Though he was disappointed in their actions, yet he loved them and led them, even the children of Israel, from their Egyptian bondage. Certainly Moses qualifies as a pioneer.

Another who qualifies is Ruth, who forsook her people, her kindred, and her country in order to accompany her mother-in-law, Naomi—worshipping Jehovah in His land and adopting the ways of His people. How very important was Ruth's obedience to Naomi and the resulting marriage to Boaz by which Ruth—the foreigner and a Moabite convert—became a great-grandmother of David and therefore an ancestress of Jesus Christ. The book of the Holy Bible that bears her name contains language poetic in style, reflective of her spirit of determination and courage.

"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

"Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."<sup>3</sup>

Yes, Ruth, precious Ruth, was a pioneer.

Other faithful women also qualify, such as Mary, the mother of Jesus; Mary Magdalene; Esther; and Elisabeth. Let us not overlook Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, nor fail to include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and some from a later period.

We remember John the Baptist. His clothing was simple, his life spartan, his message brief: faith, repentance, baptism by immersion, and the bestowal of the Holy Ghost by an authority greater than that possessed by himself. He declared, "I am not the Christ, but . . . I am sent before him."<sup>4</sup> "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh . . . : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."<sup>5</sup>

The River Jordan marked the historic meeting place when Jesus came down from Galilee to be baptized of John. At first John pleaded with the Master, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?"<sup>6</sup> Came the response: "It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. . . ."

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."<sup>7</sup>

John freely declared and taught, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."<sup>8</sup>

Of John the Lord declared, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."<sup>9</sup> Like so many other pioneers through the annals of history, John wore the martyr's crown.

### Jesus' Apostles

Many who were pioneers in spirit and action were called by Jesus to be His Apostles. Much could be told of each.

Peter was among the first of Jesus' disciples. Peter the fisherman, in response to a divine call, laid aside his nets and hearkened to the Master's declaration: Come "follow me, and I will make you [a fisher] of men."<sup>10</sup> I never think of Peter without admiring his testimony of the Lord: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."<sup>11</sup>

John the Beloved is the only one of the Twelve recorded as being at the Crucifixion of Christ. From the cruel cross, Jesus uttered the magnificent charge to John, referring to His mother, Mary: "Behold thy mother,"<sup>12</sup> and to Mary, "Behold thy son."<sup>13</sup>

The Apostles went before, showing others the way to follow. They were pioneers.

### The great reformers

History records, however, that most men did not come unto Christ, nor did they follow the way He taught. Crucified was the Lord, slain were most of the Apostles, rejected was the truth. The bright sunlight of enlightenment slipped away, and the lengthening shadows of a black night enshrouded the earth.

Generations before, Isaiah had prophesied, "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people."<sup>14</sup> Amos had foretold of a famine in the land, "not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord."<sup>15</sup> The dark ages of history seemed never to end. Would no heavenly messengers make their appearance?

In due time honest men with yearning hearts, at the peril of their very lives, attempted to establish points of reference, that they might find the true way. The day of the Reformation was dawning, but the path ahead was difficult. Persecutions would be severe, personal sacrifice overwhelming, and the cost beyond calculation. The reformers were pioneers, blazing wilderness trails in a desperate search for those lost points of

reference which, they felt, when found would lead mankind back to the truth Jesus taught.

John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, Jan Hus, Zwingli, Knox, Calvin, and Tyndale all pioneered the period of the Reformation. Significant was the declaration of Tyndale to his critics: "I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scripture than thou doest."<sup>16</sup>

Such were the teachings and lives of the great reformers. Their deeds were heroic, their contributions many, their sacrifices great—but they did not restore the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Of the reformers, one could ask: "Was their sacrifice in vain? Was their struggle futile?" I answer with a reasoned "no." The Holy Bible was now within the grasp of the people. Each person could better find his or her way. Oh, if only all could read and all could understand! But some could read, and others could hear, and all had access to God through prayer.

## Joseph Smith

The long-awaited day of restoration did indeed come. But let us review that significant event in the history of the world by recalling the testimony of the plowboy who became a prophet, the witness who was there—even Joseph Smith.

Describing his experience, Joseph said:

"I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, . . . *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*"<sup>17</sup>

"At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. . . .

" . . . I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a

beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. . . .

" . . . I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. . . .

" . . . I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

" . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"<sup>18</sup>

The Father and the Son, Jesus Christ, had appeared to Joseph Smith. The morning of the dispensation of the fulness of times had come, dispelling the darkness of the long generations of spiritual night.

Volumes have been written concerning the life and accomplishments of Joseph Smith, but for our purposes here today perhaps a highlight or two will suffice: He was visited by the angel Moroni. He translated, from the precious plates to which he was directed, the Book of Mormon, with its new witness of Christ to all the world. He was the instrument in the hands of the Lord through whom came mighty revelations pertaining to the establishment of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the course of his ministry he was visited by John the Baptist, Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, and John, that the restoration of all things might be accomplished. He endured persecution; he suffered grievously, as did his followers. He trusted in God. He was true to his prophetic calling. He commenced a marvelous missionary effort to the entire world, which today brings light and truth to the souls of mankind. At length, Joseph Smith died the martyr's death, as did his brother Hyrum.

Joseph Smith was a pioneer indeed.

### The ultimate pioneer—Jesus Christ

Turning the pages of scriptural history from beginning to end, we learn of the ultimate pioneer—even Jesus Christ. His birth was foretold by the prophets of old; His entry upon the stage of life was announced by an angel. His life and His ministry have transformed the world.

With the birth of the babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment, a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. This child was to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Promised Messiah, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He came forth from heaven to live on earth as mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. During His earthly ministry, He taught men the higher law. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He blessed the sick. He caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life.

One sentence from the book of Acts speaks volumes: Jesus “went about doing good, . . . for God was with him.”<sup>19</sup>

He taught us to pray: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”<sup>20</sup>

In the garden known as Gethsemane, where His suffering was so great that blood came from His pores, He pleaded as He prayed, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”<sup>21</sup>

He taught us to serve: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”<sup>22</sup>

He taught us to forgive: “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”<sup>23</sup>

He taught us to love: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,

and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”<sup>24</sup>

Like the true pioneer He was, He invited, “Come, follow me.”<sup>25</sup>

Let us turn to Capernaum. There Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came to the Master, saying, “My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.”<sup>26</sup> Then came the news from the ruler’s house: “Thy daughter is dead.”<sup>27</sup>

Christ responded, “Be not afraid, only believe.”<sup>28</sup> He came to the house, passed by the mourners, and said to them: “Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn,”<sup>29</sup> knowing that she was dead. “He . . . put them all out. . . . And he took [her] by the hand, and said unto her, . . . Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. . . . And they were astonished.”<sup>30</sup>

It is emotionally draining for me to recount the events leading up to the Crucifixion of the Master. I cringe when I read the words of Pilate responding to cries of the throng: “Crucify him. . . . Crucify him.”<sup>31</sup> Pilate “took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.”<sup>32</sup> Jesus was mocked. He was spit upon and a crown of thorns placed upon His head. He was given vinegar to drink. They crucified Him.

His body was placed in a borrowed tomb, but no tomb could hold the body of the Lord. On the morning of the third day came the welcome message to Mary Magdalene, to Mary the mother of James, and to other women who were with them as they came to the tomb, saw the large entrance stone rolled away, and noted the tomb was empty. Two angels said to the weeping women: “Why

seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."<sup>33</sup>

Yes, the Lord had indeed risen. He appeared to Mary; He was seen by Cephas, or Peter, then by His brethren of the Twelve. He was seen by Joseph Smith, who declared: "This is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God."<sup>34</sup>

Our Mediator, our Redeemer, our Brother, our Advocate with the Father died for our sins and the sins of all mankind. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is the foreordained but voluntary act of the Only Begotten Son of God. He offered His life as a redeeming ransom for us all.

His mission, His ministry among men, His teachings of truth, His acts of mercy, His unwavering love for us prompt our gratitude and warm our hearts. Jesus Christ, Savior of the world—even the Son of God—was and is the ultimate pioneer, for He has gone before, showing all others the way to follow. May we ever follow Him, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. As quoted by Wilford Woodruff in *The Utah Pioneers* (1880), 23.
2. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 20 vols. (1989), "pioneer," 11:883.
3. Ruth 1:16–17.
4. John 3:28.
5. Luke 3:16.
6. Matthew 3:14.
7. Matthew 3:15–17.
8. John 1:29.
9. Matthew 11:11.
10. Matthew 4:19.

11. Matthew 16:16.
12. John 19:27.
13. John 19:26.
14. Isaiah 60:2.
15. Amos 8:11.
16. Quoted in Roger Hillas, "The History of the Book," *Washington Post*, 10 Apr. 1996.
17. Joseph Smith—History 1:11.
18. Joseph Smith—History 1:13–17.
19. Acts 10:38.
20. Matthew 6:9–10.
21. Luke 22:42.
22. Matthew 25:40.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
24. Matthew 22:37–39.
25. Luke 18:22.
26. Mark 5:23.
27. Mark 5:35.
28. Mark 5:36.
29. Mark 5:39–40.
30. Mark 5:40–42.
31. Mark 15:13–14.
32. Matthew 27:24.
33. Luke 24:5–6.
34. Doctrine and Covenants 76:22–23.

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The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

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## President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve will now speak to us.



## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Testimonies of the Savior

It is April 6th. Modern scripture records that Jesus Christ was born on this day.<sup>1</sup> Humbly I speak of this glorious Being to whom each of us owes so very much. I know that what the scriptures teach of Him is true and will use some of them in expressing personal feelings.

Paul testified, "Being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."<sup>2</sup>

Eternal salvation—how precious! But you must obey Him to obtain it.

"Jesus said . . . , I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."<sup>3</sup>

"And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life."<sup>4</sup>

Shall never die; shall have eternal life—you must be obedient and endure to the end.

I testify that the Lord came "into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice," that He suffered "the pains of all men," and that He was crucified "that the resurrection might pass upon all men, that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day." I witness that "he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in [Him], . . . or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God."<sup>5</sup> Repent, be baptized, and have perfect faith in Him. These are some of the essential requirements that must be met.

I know that "there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ."<sup>6</sup> I witness that Jesus Christ atoned "for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a mer-

ciful God also."<sup>7</sup> I testify that except for the Atonement of the Holy Redeemer, the demands of justice would prevent every soul born on earth from returning to the presence of God to partake of His glory and exaltation,<sup>8</sup> for all make mistakes for which we cannot personally appease justice. I witness that except for the "infinite atonement" of Christ, we could not return to God at death and, as Jacob solemnly warned, "our spirits [would] become subject to . . . the devil, to rise no more. And our spirits [would] become like unto him, and we [would] become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, . . . to remain with the father of lies, in misery."<sup>9</sup>

I witness that "redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; . . . unto all those who have a *broken heart and a contrite spirit*; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered."<sup>10</sup> This absolute requisite of "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" prescribes the need to be submissive, compliant, humble (that is, teachable), and willingly obedient. Finally, I witness "how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the *merits, and mercy, and grace* of the Holy Messiah."<sup>11</sup>

Jesus Christ possessed *merits* that no other child of Heavenly Father could possibly have. He was a God, Jehovah, before His birth in Bethlehem. His Father not only gave Him His spirit body, but Jesus was His Only Begotten Son in the flesh. Our Master lived a perfect, sinless life and therefore was free from the demands of justice. He was and is perfect in every attribute, including love, compassion, patience, obedience, forgiveness, and humility. His *mercy* pays our debt to justice when we repent and obey Him. Even with our best efforts to

obey His teachings we will still fall short, yet because of His *grace* we will be saved "after all we can do."<sup>12</sup>

### **We must do the essential things in this life**

Although our memory of it is withheld, before we came to this earth we lived in the presence of God, our Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. We shouted for joy when given the privilege of coming to this earth to receive a body and to move forward in God's plan for our happiness. We knew that we would be tested here. Our determination was to live obediently to be able to return to be with our Father forever. Part of that testing here is to have so many seemingly interesting things to do that we can forget the main purposes for being here. Satan works very hard so that the essential things won't happen.

The plan is really very simple when considered in its essence. The Lord has told us that we are here to be tried, to be proven, to see whether we will be valiant and be obedient to His teachings. You among all of the people on earth have the best possibility of doing that because you have access to the fulness of the restored gospel and the teachings of the Savior. In quiet moments when you think about it, you recognize what is critically important in life and what isn't. Be wise and don't let good things crowd out those that are essential.

### **Ordinances and covenants are essential**

What are the essential ones? They are related to doctrine. They are centered in ordinances and embrace critical covenants. Those ordinances are baptism and confirmation into His Church and kingdom on earth. For men they include worthy ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood and honoring and using it in service to others. For each adult man and woman, they entail all of the

ordinances of the temple, including one's own personal endowment. They embody the sealing ordinance of the temple where a man and wife are bound so that through obedience they can live together for time and all eternity. When faithful, the children born to that union or later sealed to their parents are joined in love and rejoicing throughout all eternity. To receive all of the blessings of His atoning sacrifice, we are asked only to be obedient to His commandments and to receive *all* of these essential ordinances. The Atonement will not only help us overcome our transgressions and mistakes, but in His time, it will resolve all inequities of life—those things that are unfair which are the consequences of circumstance or others' acts and not our own decisions.

While some may not understand or agree, I testify that it is not sufficient to be baptized and then live an acceptable life, avoiding major transgressions. The Lord has decreed that the additional ordinances and covenants that I have mentioned must be received for exaltation and eternal life. Being worthy of temple ordinances means that you will choose to do what many in the world are not willing to do. You will keep the Sabbath day holy, exercise faith through the payment of tithing and fast offerings, consistently participate in Church worship, give service, and show love and appreciation for your family by helping each member of it. After you have received all of the temple ordinances, you will continue to grow by keeping the covenants made and faithfully "endur[ing] to the end."<sup>13</sup>

Keeping the covenants is not hard when you do it willingly with a "broken heart and a contrite spirit."<sup>14</sup> When obeyed, those covenants bring happiness and joy. They give purpose to life. Difficulty comes when agency is used to make choices that are inconsistent with those covenants. Study the things you do in your discretionary time, that time you

are free to control. Do you find that it is centered in those things that are of highest priority and of greatest importance? Or do you unconsciously, consistently fill it with trivia and activities that are not of enduring value nor help you accomplish the purpose for which you came to earth? Think of the long view of life, not just what's going to happen today or tomorrow. *Don't give up what you most want in life for something you think you want now.*

### **The Savior and His teachings must have first priority**

The essential things must be accomplished during your testing period on earth. They must have first priority. They must not be sacrificed for lesser things, even though they are good and worthwhile accomplishments. After this life, you will be restored to that which you have here allowed yourself to become. Oh, if I but had the capacity to communicate the peace and serenity that come from knowing that you and your family have worthily received all of the saving ordinances and the corresponding covenants are being righteously kept.

I encourage you with every capacity that I possess to receive *all* of the ordinances for salvation and do all you can to have the other members of your family receive those ordinances before departing this earth. You can progress much more rapidly here on earth with your mortal body in this environment of good and evil than you will as a spirit in the spirit world.<sup>15</sup> Compared to the length of a normal life, it doesn't take much time to receive all of the ordinances essential to exaltation. It does take diligence, understanding, and obedience. It does require you to do all within your capacity to qualify for those ordinances and to receive as many as you are able. Where, for reasons beyond your control, you are not able to receive them all, live worthily and do not dis-

qualify yourself through neglect, indifference, or unworthiness. The Lord will make it possible for you to receive all of the blessings He has promised in His time and place.

Whether you intend to or not, when you live as though the Savior and His teachings are only one of many other important priorities in your life, you are clearly on the road to disappointment and likely on the path to tragedy. Is it really wise to forfeit eternal happiness by fulfilling only part of the requirements? I pray that you'll be moved to make needed changes now.

If you have strayed in transgression, please come back. If you have been enticed by the things of the world to forget the things of God, correct your priorities. If you haven't received all of the essential ordinances, decide now to do what is necessary to receive them.

### **The Atonement gives richness and joy**

Oh, how grateful we must be for the Atonement wrought by our Redeemer, Jesus Christ! It gives life richness and joy when we live the pattern described in this scripture:

"They did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh *because of their yielding their hearts unto God.*"<sup>16</sup>

I witness that "remission of sins [through the Atonement] bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love."<sup>17</sup> I testify that God, your Eternal Father, loves you. He hears your prayers and will answer them.<sup>18</sup> The Redeemer loves you and will help you do the essential things that bring happiness

now and forever. I am a witness of Jesus Christ. I know that He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:1.
2. Hebrews 5:8–9.
3. John 11:25–26.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
5. See 2 Nephi 9:21–24.
6. Helaman 5:9.
7. Alma 42:15.
8. See John Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement* (1882), 179–83; see also Revelation 3:21; 21:7.
9. 2 Nephi 9:7–9.
10. 2 Nephi 2:6–7; italics added.
11. 2 Nephi 2:8; italics added.
12. 2 Nephi 25:23.
13. Omni 1:26.
14. 3 Nephi 12:19.
15. See Melvin J. Ballard—*Crusader for Righteousness* (1966), 212–13.
16. Helaman 3:35; italics added.
17. Moroni 8:26.

18. See Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 252.

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The choir sang “With Songs of Praise.”

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#### President Hinckley

Elder Richard G. Scott has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung “With Songs of Praise.”

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “The Spirit of God.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve will then speak to us, following which the choir will sing “Faith in Every Footstep.”

We will then view a special video presentation prepared for this conference.

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The choir and congregation sang “The Spirit of God.”

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## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### Honoring the pioneers

For the past several months, the attention of the Church has been focused on the extraordinary events surrounding the establishment of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints here in the Salt Lake Valley and elsewhere throughout the world. It is wonderful to note that the wards and stakes are using the yearlong pioneer sesquicentennial celebration as an opportunity to honor the Utah pioneers of 1847 as well as the remarkable efforts of our pioneers in every land who have blazed spiritual trails with faith in every one of their footsteps.

The handcart built in Siberia and presently moving through the missions of Russia and Ukraine is a wonderful example of the worldwide effort to honor

our pioneers. Plans are for the handcart to be pulled down Emigration Canyon on the final leg of its journey, arriving at This Is the Place State Park on July 22.

This is a year for remembering our past and drawing strength to face and conquer the challenges of today from the exemplary faith and courage of those who faced and conquered the challenges of yesterday. As we honor these great pioneers from many lands, we shall share historical accounts that will often bring tears to our eyes and feelings of pure gratitude to our hearts. Through music, drama, and stirring reenactments, we will be reminded of incredible pioneer journeys, both temporal and spiritual.

We cannot begin to understand the journeys made by those who laid the foundation of this dispensation until we

understand their spiritual underpinnings. Once we make that connection, however, we will begin to see how their journeys parallel our own. There are lessons for *us* in every footstep they took—lessons of love, courage, commitment, devotion, endurance, and, most of all, faith.

### Footsteps of faith

For the Utah pioneers of 1847, their faith was grounded in principle. They left their homes, their temple, and in some cases their families, in search of a place of refuge where they could worship without fear of persecution. There was little that they could carry with them in the way of provisions and material possessions, but each wagon and handcart was heavily laden with faith—faith in God, faith in the Restoration of His Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and faith that God knew where they were going and that He would see them through.

One of those who traveled the Mormon Trail in 1847 referred to it as the “trail of hope.” I love that title: “trail of hope.” It speaks of the universal yearning of each person to find a safe haven, a community of Saints where hearts are united and hope prevails.

Those 19th-century pioneers to whom we pay special tribute during this sesquicentennial year never set out to be heroes, and yet they accomplished heroic things. That is what makes them Saints. They were a band of believers who tried to do the right thing for the right reasons, ordinary men and women who were called on to perform an extraordinary work. At times, they gave in to discouragement and allowed themselves to murmur and complain. But ultimately their faith in God and the man they sustained as their prophet and leader prevailed, and they righted their vision and attitudes along with their wagons. In the process they found joy amid the hardships and trials of the trek.

### “Nothing to fear from the journey”

Nearly seven years before the pioneer exodus to the mountains of Utah, William Clayton wrote to his fellow Saints in England, urging them to come to Zion, not realizing that Zion would soon be in wagons and handcarts moving west. He wrote: “Although we are . . . distant from each other I do not forget you. . . . But to the praise of God be it spoken, all I have endured has never hurt or discouraged me, but done me good. . . . We have sometimes been almost suffocated with heat . . . , sometimes almost froze with cold. We have had to sleep on boards, instead of feathers. . . . We have had our clothes wet through with no privilege of drying them or changing them, . . . had to sleep . . . out of doors, in very severe weather, and many such things which you [have] no idea of. . . . [Yet] we have been . . . healthy & cheerful. . . . If you will be faithful, *you have nothing to fear from the journey*. The Lord will take care of his saints.”<sup>1</sup>

William Clayton would later pen the lyrics to “Come, Come, Ye Saints” (*Hymns*, no. 30) during the trek across Iowa. He and a host of others would learn even more intimately during the 1,300-mile exodus to Utah that there is “nothing to fear from the journey” if faith is your constant companion.

### Lessons for today from the pioneers

Is there a lesson in the pioneer experience for us today? I believe there is. The faith that motivated the pioneers of 1847 as well as pioneers in other lands was a simple faith centered in the basic doctrines of the restored gospel, which they knew to be true. That’s all that mattered to them, and I believe that is all that should matter to us. Our faith needs to be focused on the fundamental truths that God lives, that we are His children, and that Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son and He is our Savior. We need to know that They restored the Church to the

earth in its fulness through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Through the restored gospel of Jesus Christ we learn that our Father's plan for the happiness of His children is clear and quite simple when studied and accepted with real faith.

Traveling from Nauvoo to the valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1847 is not unlike a young missionary from Idaho traveling to Siberia in late 1993 as one of the first Latter-day Saints to labor in that land. Nearly every day our missionaries arrive in countries where they have little knowledge of the language and where the food, culture, and living conditions are often much different from that which they are accustomed to. And yet they go boldly as modern pioneers, not fearing the journey, walking with faith in every footstep to bring to people everywhere the good news of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our faith can help us be equally bold and fearless during the course of our respective journeys, whether we are parents working with a troubled child, a single parent trying to raise a worthy family, young people struggling to find a place in a wicked and confusing world, or a single person trying to make the journey through life alone. No matter how difficult the trail, and regardless of how heavy our load, we can take comfort in knowing that others before us have borne life's most grievous trials and tragedies by looking to heaven for peace, comfort, and hopeful assurance. We can know as they knew that God is our Father, that He cares about us individually and collectively, and that as long as we continue to exercise our faith and trust in Him there is nothing to fear in the journey. Like the pioneers of 1847 who ventured west along a trail that kept them relatively close to life-sustaining fresh water from rivers, particularly the Platte and the Sweetwater, we need to follow and partake of the Living Water of Christ to refresh our faith and sustain our efforts as we travel the road through mortality.

### Great rewards if we journey faithfully

Life isn't always easy. At some point in our journey we may feel much as the pioneers did as they crossed Iowa—up to our knees in mud, forced to bury some of our dreams along the way. We all face rocky ridges, with the wind in our face and winter coming on too soon. Sometimes it seems as though there is no end to the dust that stings our eyes and clouds our vision. Sharp edges of despair and discouragement jut out of the terrain to slow our passage. Always, there is a Devil's Gate, which will swing wide open to lure us in. Those who are wise and faithful will steer a course as far from such temptation as possible, while others—sometimes those who are nearest and dearest to us—succumb to the attraction of ease, comfort, convenience, and rest. Occasionally we reach the top of one summit in life, as the pioneers did, only to see more mountain peaks ahead, higher and more challenging than the one we have just traversed. Tapping unseen reservoirs of faith and endurance, we, as did our forebears, inch ever forward toward that day when our voices can join with those of all pioneers who have endured in faith, singing, "All is well! All is well!" (*Hymns*, no. 30).

And how will we feel then, as we stand shoulder to shoulder with the great pioneers of Church history? How will they feel about us? Will they see faith in our footsteps? I believe they will, particularly as they view our lives and experiences from the expanded perspective of eternity. Although our journeys today are less demanding physically than the trek of our pioneers 150 years ago, they are no less challenging. Certainly it was hard to walk across a continent to establish a new home in a dry western desert. But who can say if that was any more difficult than is the task of living faithful, righteous lives in today's confusingly sinful world, where the trail is constantly shifting and where divine

markers of right and wrong are being replaced by political expediency and diminishing morality. The road we travel today is treacherous, and the scriptures tell us it will continue to be so until the very end. But our reward will be the same as that which awaits worthy pioneers of all ages who live faithfully the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, make right choices, and give their all to build the kingdom of God on earth.

We are the inheritors of a tremendous heritage. Now it is our privilege and responsibility to be part of the Restoration's continuing drama, and there are great and heroic stories of faith to be written in our day. It will require every bit of our strength, wisdom, and energy to overcome the obstacles that will confront us. But even that will not be enough. We will learn, as did our pioneer ancestors, that it is only in faith—*real* faith, whole-souled, tested and tried—that we will find safety and confidence as we walk our own perilous pathways through life.

### Jesus Christ has rescued us

We are all bound together—19th- and 20th-century pioneers and more—in our great journey to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and to allow His atoning sacrifice to work its miracle in our lives. While we all can appreciate the footsteps of faith walked by Joseph Smith and his followers from Palmyra to Carthage Jail and across the Great Plains, we should ever stand in reverential awe as we contemplate the path trod by the Master. His faithful footsteps to Gethsemane and to Calvary rescued all of us and opened the way for us to return to our heavenly home.

Let us remember that the Savior is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and there can be no greater promise than to know that if we are faithful and true, we will one day be safely encircled in the arms of His love (see D&C 6:20). He is always there to give encouragement, to

forgive, and to rescue. Therefore, as we exercise faith and are diligent in keeping the commandments, we have nothing to fear from the journey.

Three of my grandsons stood with me on the crest of the hill known as the Eminence last summer. Looking down at the Sweetwater where the Willie Company was stranded, cold and starving, we read from their journals of the joy of their rescue. As John Chislett wrote:

"Just as the sun was sinking beautifully behind the distant hills, . . . several covered wagons . . . were seen coming towards us. The news ran through the camp like wildfire. . . . Shouts of joy rent the air; strong men wept till tears ran freely down their furrowed and sun-burnt cheeks. . . .

"That evening, for the first time in quite a period, the songs of Zion were to be heard in the camp. . . . With the cravings of hunger satisfied, and with hearts filled with gratitude to God and our good brethren, we all united in prayer, and then retired to rest."<sup>2</sup>

At that moment, standing on the same hill from which the Willie Company first saw their rescuers, I contemplated the joy that will fill our hearts when we fully come to know the eternal significance of the greatest rescue—the rescue of the family of God by the Lord Jesus Christ. For it is through Him that we have promise of eternal life. Our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the source of spiritual power that will give you and me the assurance that we have nothing to fear from the journey. I know the Lord Jesus Christ lives, and our unwavering faith in Him will see us safely along our journey through life, to which I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. William Clayton to the Saints in England, from Commerce, Illinois, 10 Dec. 1840, William Clayton Collection, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; punctuation modernized and italics added.

2. As quoted in LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion: The Story of a Unique Western Migration, 1856-1860* (1960), 106-7.

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The choir sang "Faith in Every Footstep."

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## Faith in Every Footstep: The Epic Pioneer Journey

**Narrator: President Gordon B. Hinckley**

The epic pioneer journey of the Latter-day Saints began on the banks of the Mississippi River. Here at Nauvoo they had transformed a swamp into a thriving community of commerce and fellowship. But Nauvoo was not to be a final home, merely a brief rest for a season. The severe persecution that had driven the Saints from Missouri again threatened their lives and their city. The Prophet Joseph Smith and Hyrum were martyred at Carthage Jail on June 27, 1844. Life in Nauvoo was drawing to a close.

Sunday, February 1, 1846, the Saints worshiped together in the City of Joseph. The next day, Brigham Young directed families to be ready to leave with only four hours' notice.

In the bone-chilling cold of that bitter winter, the exodus began. Many of the Saints gathered their belongings and closed the doors of their dwellings for the last time as they turned to what lay across the river—and west.

Nauvoo is peaceful now. Homes and shops have been lovingly restored. This is a place that speaks of industry and commitment. I see their courage and craftsmanship as they built a city to God.

How the Saints must have felt, leaving so much behind—the fields they had cultivated, the trees they had planted, the temple they had built. The men, women, and children walked out of their beautiful homes, climbed aboard their wagons, drove down to the river, there to cross and move slowly over the soil of Iowa, looking back now and again at

what they were leaving and would never see again.

Leaving Nauvoo was a remarkable act of faith. There was much of hardship ahead for these pioneers, but they had faith in their leaders and faith in the Lord and His goodness—faith that He would once again lead His people to the promised land, faith that they would not falter or fall. So they walked out into a wilderness, their journey marked by faith in every footstep.

**Narrator: President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency**

The way west was slow. Many were ill prepared for the grueling trek. Freezing temperatures, incessant rain, and mud up to the knees tried even the hardest emigrant. They struggled for 131 days just to cross Iowa.

Like the army of Israel of old, they had their cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. Out of the travail of Iowa came the hymn that echoes down the generations: "Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear; / But with joy wend your way" (*Hymns*, no. 30).

Stopping at Garden Grove and Mount Pisgah to set up stations for those who would follow, these faithful pioneers pressed on to the banks of the Missouri and temporary respite for the winter.

Here at Winter Quarters was Zion in the wilderness. President Brigham Young organized the people and pooled their meager resources. Yet despite all they could do, sickness and death stalked the camps.



This monument is placed directly over the graves of an unknown child and seven other pioneers. My heart is deeply touched as I realize just how high a price those noble Saints paid in responding to the call of the prophet to leave their homes and journey west.

So many struggled and lost so much. Truly, these noble pioneers walked a path of pain and a trail of tears. Their journey was over, but their names live on as testaments of their love of truth and faith in the Lord.

**Narrator: President James E. Faust,  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency**

When spring came that April of 1847, the Quorum of the Twelve, under the direction of Brigham Young, hand-picked a vanguard company and left Winter Quarters with 143 men, 3 women, and 2 young boys, 72 wagons, 93 horses, 66 oxen, 52 mules, 19 cows, 17 dogs, and some chickens.

Between that refuge and the promise of Zion stood a vast plain and the fertile Platte River, their lifeline as they pushed farther into the American West. Moving across Nebraska, they marked the rolling miles and journeyed past Chimney Rock, a solitary formation jutting out of the prairie.

Into this land speckled with sage and air swirling with dust, tired oxen lumbered, wagon wheels creaked, brave men and women toiled, and occasionally wolves howled. Even today, signs of their crossing are carved into the landscape.

The pioneers left the North Platte and now followed the Sweetwater, a stream they would ford many times. Camping at the round outcropping called Independence Rock, a few of these 19th-century travelers left their names on the granite stone.

Past Independence Rock, the wagons skirted the side of Devil's Gate, a deep gash in the hillside and often men-

tioned in their journals. The trail soon turned upward and increasingly rocky.

Here at Rocky Ridge is holy ground. This very spot is one of the highest points on the trail west. The pioneers who came over this ridge faced discouragement, some even death, as they inched their way up this sharp slope. I hold in my hand a square nail and a piece of metal jolted loose from a wagon or a handcart. Imagine facing this ridge in a wagon. Then imagine pulling a handcart.

For some, the punishing climb of Rocky Ridge would be fatal. The Martin and Willie Handcart Companies of 1856 were caught in early blizzards near this summit. Rescue came from Salt Lake but too late to save close to 200 souls who perished in the cold and deep snow.

Martin's Cove sheltered many during that agonizing and poignant time. A memorial at Rock Creek honors those buried here for their faith in the face of enormous adversity.

In the heroic effort of the handcart pioneers, we learn a great truth. All must pass through a refiner's fire, and the insignificant and unimportant in our lives can melt away like dross and make our faith bright, intact, and strong. There seems to be a full measure of anguish, sorrow, and often heartbreak for everyone, including those who earnestly seek to do right and be faithful. Yet this is part of the purging to become acquainted with God.

**Narrator: President Monson**

With the Wind River peaks to the north, the pioneer trail crossed South Pass—the only major break between mountain ranges and the most direct route to the Great Basin. Entering northeastern Utah, they worked their way slowly through Echo Canyon, a narrow passageway flanked by red, overhanging cliffs.

This final stretch would try what little strength was left. Ahead loomed a

broken succession of hills piled on hills, and mountains in every direction. Hearts full of enthusiasm to be so near their journey's end often sank as they knew there was only one way to go: up and over.

On this high summit they named Big Mountain, the pioneers gazed for the first time on their new home: a glistening mountain valley on the far horizon. What joy they must have felt! The countless sacrifices and struggles along the way were nearly over. The Salt Lake Valley was in sight. Although much hardship still lay ahead, they had endured. With feet worn and weary with fatigue, they had kept step with their faith.

Big Mountain holds a special place in my heart. A pioneer ancestor, Gibson Condie, came over this summit on his way to help rescue the stranded handcart pioneers. At the call of the prophet, he journeyed to this very spot in the bitter winter of 1856. The snow was 16 feet deep on the road. How grateful I am for this pioneer ancestor, who, leaving the comfort of home and family, risked his own safety to help those in such desperate need.

#### **Narrator: President Faust**

President Young arrived in the valley on a Saturday, July 24th. These pioneers had come so far and given so much, and they paused on the Sabbath to worship and give thanks for their safe arrival.

They came "one of a city, and two of a family" (Jeremiah 3:14) across a continent to a new life in the desert. What else but a divine restoration would prompt such an endeavor and require such a sacrifice? They had walked with faith, knowing that God lives and He knew where those steps would take them.

Now in this valley home, they took fresh courage for the tasks ahead. There were shelters to erect, land to cultivate, crops to plant, and the temple to build.

#### **Narrator: President Hinckley**

Rising above the Salt Lake Valley is a dome-shaped peak. Brigham Young saw it in a vision before the Saints left Nauvoo. He saw an ensign descend upon the hill and heard the voice of Joseph Smith say, "Build under [that] point . . . and you will prosper and have peace" (quoted by George A. Smith, in *Deseret News* [semiweekly], 29 June 1869, 3).

When Brigham Young first arrived in the valley, he immediately recognized the peak. On the morning of July 26, 1847, the men who would eventually comprise the new First Presidency, along with several members of the Twelve, climbed its slopes.

This small group of priesthood leaders gazed out upon the valley below. "This is whereon we will plant the soles of our feet," President Young said, "and where the Lord will place his name among his people" (quoted by Erastus Snow, in *Deseret News*, 22 Oct. 1873, 5).

As I now stand at Ensign Peak and see the valley below, I marvel at the foresight of that little group. These prophets, dressed in old, travel-worn clothes, standing in boots they had worn for more than a thousand miles, spoke of a millennial vision. It was both bold and audacious. It was almost unbelievable.

Here they were, almost a thousand miles from the nearest settlement to the east and almost eight hundred miles from the Pacific coast. They were in an untried climate. They had never raised a crop here. They had not built a structure of any kind.

They were exiles, driven from their fair city on the Mississippi into this desert region of the West. But they were possessed of a vision drawn from the scriptures and words of revelation: "And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isaiah 11:12).

This great pioneering movement of more than a century ago goes forward with latter-day pioneers. Today pioneer blood flows in our veins just as it did with those who walked west. It's the essence of our courage to face modern-day mountains and our commitment to carry on. The faith of those early pioneers burns still, and nations are being blessed by latter-day pioneers who possess a clear vision of this work of the Lord.

The footsteps that made such a deep impression over the heartland of America make similar impressions in countries across the world—from Belgium to Brazil and France to the Philippines.

Step by faithful step, we walk together toward a glorious destiny, building the kingdom of God on earth and preparing the minds and hearts of people everywhere to come unto Christ, the Redeemer and Savior of the world.

### **President Hinckley**

Now my brothers and sisters, following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing the great hymn of our migration, "Come, Come, Ye Saints," and the benediction will be offered by Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander.

The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

### **Recipients of a magnificent heritage**

With that picture as a backdrop I wish to say something in recapitulation of what we have already heard and seen on this, the birthday of the Church. As we have been reminded a number of times, this is a great anniversary year, and I wish to go on record concerning the magnitude of what our forebears accomplished and what this means to us. It is a story with which most of you are familiar, but it is worth another telling.

It is a story so large in scope, so fraught with human suffering and the workings of faith, that it will never grow old or stale.

Whether you are among the posterity of the pioneers or whether you were baptized only yesterday, each is the beneficiary of their great undertaking.

What a wonderful thing it is to have behind us a great and noble body of progenitors! What a marvelous thing to be the recipients of a magnificent heritage that speaks of the guiding hand of the Lord, of the listening ear of His prophets, of the total dedication of a vast con-

gregation of Saints who loved this cause more than life itself! Small wonder that so many hundreds of thousands of us—yea, even millions—will pause this coming July to remember them, to celebrate their wondrous accomplishments, and to rejoice in the miraculous thing that has grown from the foundation they laid.

### **The pioneers' remarkable achievements**

Permit me to quote to you from Wallace Stegner, not a member of the Church but a contemporary at the University of Utah who later became professor of creative writing at Stanford and a Pulitzer Prize winner. He was a close observer and a careful student. He wrote this concerning these forebears of ours:

"They built a commonwealth, or as they would have put it, a Kingdom. But the story of their migration is more than the story of the founding of Utah. In their hegira they opened up southern Iowa from Locust Creek to the Missouri, made the first roads, built the first bridges, established the first communities. They transformed the Missouri at

Council Bluffs from a trading post and an Indian agency into an outpost of civilization, founded settlements on both sides of the river and made Winter Quarters . . . and later Kanessville . . . into outfitting points that rivaled Independence, Westport, and St. Joseph. . . . Their guide books and trail markers, their bridges and ferries, though made for the Saints scheduled to come later, served also for the Gentiles."

He continues: "The Mormons were one of the principal forces in the settlement of the West. Their main body opened southern Iowa, the Missouri frontier, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah. Samuel Brannan's group of eastern Saints who sailed around the Horn in the ship *Brooklyn*, and the Mormon Battalion that marched 2,000 miles overland from Fort Leavenworth to San Diego, were secondary prongs of the Mormon movement; between them, they contributed to the opening of the Southwest and of California. Battalion members were at Coloma when gold gleamed up from the bedrock of Sutter's millrace. . . . Brigham Young's colonizing Mormons, taking to wheels again after the briefest stay, radiated outward from the Salt Lake, Utah, and Weber Valleys and planted settlements that reached from Northern Arizona to the Lemhi River in Idaho, and from Fort Bridger in Wyoming to Genoa in Carson Valley . . . , and in the Southwest down through St. George and Las Vegas to San Bernardino."<sup>1</sup>

That is a capsule account of their remarkable achievements.

### The journey west

In a period of seven years, our people, who had fled the extermination order of Governor Boggs of Missouri, came to Illinois and built the largest city then in the state. It was on the shores of the Mississippi, where the river makes a great sweeping bend. Here they con-

structed brick homes, a school, chartered a university, erected an assembly hall, and built their temple, reportedly the most magnificent structure then in the entire state of Illinois. But hatred against them continued to enflame. It culminated in the death of their leader, Joseph Smith, and his brother Hyrum, who were shot and killed at Carthage on June 27, 1844.

Brigham Young knew they could not stay there. They determined to move west, to a faraway place where, as Joseph Smith had said, "the devil cannot dig us out."<sup>2</sup> On February 4, 1846, wagons rolled down Parley's Street to the river. Here they were ferried across and began to roll over the soil of Iowa. The weather subsequently turned bitter cold. The river froze; they crossed on the ice. Once they said good-bye to Nauvoo, they consigned themselves to the elements of nature and to the mercy of God.

When the ground thawed, it was mud—deep and treacherous mud. Wagons sank to their axles, and teams had to be doubled and tripled to move them. They cut a road where none had been before.

Finally reaching the Grand Encampment on the Missouri, they built hundreds of shelters, some very crude and others more comfortable. It was anything to get out of the treacherous weather.

All during that winter of 1846 in those frontier establishments, forges roared and anvils rang with the making of wagons. My own grandfather, barely out of his teens, became an expert blacksmith and wagon builder. No vocation was more useful in those days than that of the ability to shape iron. He would later build his own wagon and with his young wife and baby and his brother-in-law set off for the West. Somewhere on that long journey, his wife sickened and died and his brother-in-law died on the same day. He buried them both, tear-

fully said good-bye, tenderly picked up his child, and marched on to the valley of the Great Salt Lake.

In the spring of 1847, the wagons of the first company pulled out of Winter Quarters and headed west. Generally they followed a route along the north side of the Platte River. Those going to California and Oregon followed a route on the south side. The road of the Mormons later became the right-of-way of the Union Pacific Railroad and the transcontinental highway.

### **"This is the right place"**

As we all know, on July 24, 1847, after 111 days, they emerged from the mountain canyon into the Salt Lake Valley. Brigham Young declared, "This is the right place."<sup>3</sup>

I stand in reverent awe of that statement. They might have gone on to California or Oregon, where the soil had been tested, where there was ample water, where there was a more equable climate. Jim Bridger had warned them against trying to grow crops in the Salt Lake Valley. Sam Brannan had pleaded with Brigham to go on to California. Now they looked across the barren valley, with its saline waters shimmering in the July sun to the west. No plow had ever broken the sun-baked soil. Here stood Brigham Young, 46 years of age, telling his people this was the right place. They had never planted a crop or known a harvest. They knew nothing of the seasons. Thousands of their numbers were coming behind them, and there would yet be tens of thousands. They accepted Brigham Young's prophetic statement.

Homes soon began to spring from the desert soil. Trees were planted, and the miracle is that they grew. Construction of a new temple was begun, a task that was to last unremittingly for 40 years. From that 1847 beginning to the coming of the railroad in 1869, they

came by the tens of thousands to their Zion in the mountains. Nauvoo was evacuated. Its temple was burned by an arsonist, and its walls later fell in a storm.

Missionary work had begun in England in 1837. It spread from there to Scandinavia and gradually to Germany and other countries. All who were converted wanted to go to Zion.

That gathering was not a haphazard operation. Church agents were responsible for every detail. Ships were commissioned to bring the immigrants to New Orleans, New York, and Boston. The ultimate goal was always the same: the valley of the Great Salt Lake, from which place many of them would spread in all directions to found new cities and settlements, more than 350 of them in the Rocky Mountain area.

Hundreds died on that long trail. They died of cholera and black canker, of sheer exhaustion and hunger and the bitter cold.

### **Sufferings of the handcart pioneers**

Most noble, as we've heard, among those who paid a terrible price were the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies of 1856.

There were not wagons enough to carry all who were converted in England and western Europe. If they were to come to Zion, they would have to walk, pulling a small cart behind them. Hundreds did so, and traveled faster than did the ox teams. But these two companies in 1856 literally walked with death. They started late, and no one knew they were coming. Their carts were not ready. A few who could afford wagons were assigned to travel with them to give assistance. They started west singing as they went. Little did they know what lay ahead of them.

They walked beside the Platte, ever westward. Near Fort Laramie their troubles began. Snow commenced falling.

Their rations were reduced. They knew they were in desperate circumstances as they slowly crept over the high plains of Wyoming. Some 200 perished in that terrible, tragic march.

Legion are the stories of those who were there and who suffered almost unto death and who carried all of their lives the scars of that dreadful experience. It was a tragedy without parallel in the western migration of our people.

When all is said and done, no one can imagine, no one can appreciate or understand how desperate were their circumstances. I wish to pay tribute to the people of the Riverton Wyoming Stake, who have done so much to identify and complete the temple work for and memorialize those who walked that march of death and terrible suffering. I could recount story after story, but there is no time for that. I mention very briefly only one.

At Rock Creek Hollow, on property the Church now owns, is the common grave of 13 who perished in one night. Among them was a nine-year-old girl from Denmark who was traveling alone with another family. Her name was Bodil Mortensen.

In October of 1856, wind-driven heavy snow was already two feet deep as those of the James G. Willie Company tried to find some shelter from the terrible storm. Bodil went out and gathered brush with which to make a fire. Returning, she reached her cart with the brush in her arm. There she died, frozen to death. Starvation and bitter cold drained from her emaciated body the life she had fought for.

We thank the Lord today that all of this is now behind us, as much as a century and a half behind us.

We stand today as the recipients of their great effort. I hope we are thankful. I hope we carry in our hearts a deep sense of gratitude for all that they have done for us.

## Great things are expected of us

It is now 1997, and the future is ahead. As great things were expected of them, so are they of us. We note what they did with what they had. We have so much more, with an overwhelming challenge to go on and build the kingdom of God. There is so much to do. We have a divine mandate to carry the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. We have a charge to teach and baptize in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Said the resurrected Savior, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."<sup>4</sup>

We are engaged in a great and consuming crusade for truth and goodness. Fortunately we live in a season of goodwill. There has come down to us an inheritance of respect and honor to our people. We must grasp the torch and run the race.

Our people are found in positions of responsibility across the world. Their good reputation enhances the work of the Lord. Wherever we may be, whatever the circumstances in which we live, "if there [be] anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, [let us] seek after these things."<sup>5</sup>

The little stone envisioned by Daniel is rolling forth in majesty and power. There are some who still scorn. Let us live above it. There are still those who regard us as a peculiar people. Let us accept that as a compliment and go forth showing by the virtue of our lives the strength and goodness of the wonderful thing in which we believe.

At a time when families all across the world are falling apart, let us solidify our own, let us strengthen them, let us nurture them in righteousness and truth.

With so great an inheritance, we can do no less than our very best. Those who have gone before expect this of us. We have a mandate from the Lord. We have a vision of our cause and purpose.

Let us seek out the righteous of the earth who will listen to our message of salvation. Let us bring light and truth and understanding to a generation that is prone in its disillusionment to look for other things.

God has blessed us with wonderful facilities in which to teach the living truth. We now have meetinghouses scattered across the continents. Let us use them to nurture our people with "the good word of God."<sup>6</sup>

We now have temples far and wide and are building more, that the great work of salvation for the dead may go forward with an ever-increasing momentum.

Our forebears laid a solid and marvelous foundation. Now ours is the great opportunity to build a superstructure, all fitly framed together with Christ as the chief cornerstone.

### **Our great season of opportunity**

My beloved brethren and sisters, how blessed we are! What a wonderful inheritance we have! It involved sacrifice, suffering, death, vision, faith, and knowledge and a testimony of God the Eternal Father and His Son, the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

The covered wagons of long ago have been replaced by airplanes that thread the skies. The horse and buggy have been replaced by air-conditioned automobiles that speed over ribbons of highway. We have great institutions of

learning. We have vast treasures of family history. We have houses of worship by the thousands. Governments of the earth look upon us with respect and favor. The media treat us well. This, I submit, is our great season of opportunity.

We honor best those who have gone before when we serve well in the cause of truth. May the Almighty smile with favor upon us as we seek to do His will and go forward as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."<sup>7</sup>

For this I humbly pray, as I both look back to the past and forward to the future in this anniversary year, and leave my testimony and blessing with you in the name of Him who is our Master, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (1964), 6-7.
2. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (1972), 332.
3. Quoted in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 3:224.
4. Mark 16:15.
5. Articles of Faith 1:13.
6. Jacob 6:7.
7. 1 Peter 2:9.

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The choir sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander offered the benediction.

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## **SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION**

The fifth session of the 167th Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 6, 1997. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Craig Jessop conducting and John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President Thomas S. Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 167th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We note that Elders Dallin H. Oaks, W. Eugene Hansen, and Carlos H. Amado are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall. Elders Hugh W. Pinnock, Lino Alvarez, and Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and Bishop Richard C. Edgley are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We also send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Craig Jessop and accompanied by John

Longhurst and Clay Christiansen, will provide the music for this session.

The choir will begin this service by singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Loren C. Dunn of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

Elder Loren C. Dunn offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

The choir will now sing "I Stand All Amazed at the Love Jesus Offers Me." Then Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

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The choir sang "I Stand All Amazed."

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### Rededication of the early Saints

After arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, the Mormon pioneers found establishing settlements in the desert to be a real challenge. Daily they encountered trials and hardships that kept reminding them that their new life was very different from the one to which they had been accustomed. There were homes to build, land to develop, irrigation ditches to dig, gardens to plant, wood to chop, and cattle to herd. Also there were constant immigrations into Utah, drought, and the grasshopper plague, all making the economy of this new territory very uncertain. Because of the great effort required to provide for their families, some of the early pioneers drifted into spiritual lethargy. This was of grave concern to the early Church leaders. They

believed that some of their struggles were the direct result of the Saints' laxity in keeping the commandments.

In 1856 the First Presidency commenced a reform movement. Church leaders traveled throughout the territory crying repentance to the Saints. They sent the block teachers out with a list of questions to ask the families. Some of these questions were:

Have you betrayed your brethren or sisters in anything?

Have you committed adultery?

Have you taken the name of Deity in vain?

Have you been intoxicated with strong drink?

Have you paid your debts?

Do you teach your family the gospel of salvation?



Do you pray night and morning with your family?

Do you attend your ward meetings? (Adapted from "Questions to Be Asked the Latter-day Saints," in *Church History in the Fulness of Times* [Church Educational System manual, 1993], 366.)

The Saints were challenged by their leaders to rededicate themselves to serving the Lord and keeping His commandments, and they accepted their leaders' counsel and repented.

### **The Holy Ghost will direct us**

In 1997 we have many of the same concerns, although our world is very different. All these questions would still be very appropriate if asked today. Moreover, the list could probably be expanded due to new sources of temptation that the early pioneers could not have anticipated. Increasingly, the balance between living in the world and not being of the world is becoming more delicate. Publications, radio, television, and the Internet have surrounded us with worldliness. Some of the television programming has caused such a negative public outcry that a rating system has been established so viewers can evaluate the content of the programs. Surely this is an admission that there is a great deal available to us that must be avoided. The question is whether or not we can trust others to make rating decisions for us. We are fortunate to have been blessed with a special power to direct us in making important decisions between right and wrong.

In that special, sacred hour when the Savior realized that His earthly ministry was about at an end, He gathered His Twelve together in what we call the Last Supper. He gave them hope that they would not be left alone after He had departed from them. He comforted them with these words:

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Upon receiving this blessed assurance, the other Judas, not Iscariot, asked, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John 14:22).

Jesus answered and said unto him:

"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. . . .

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:23, 26).

After the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, the promised Comforter was given to those who would submit themselves to be baptized by water and be numbered among His Saints. On the day of Pentecost there was a great manifestation that was given to the Twelve, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost. Peter called on those assembled to repent and be baptized and then they would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

A similar event occurred when the Savior appeared to the Nephites.

### **The power to bestow the Holy Ghost has been restored**

Dark days followed the establishment of the Savior's Church as apostasy entered in among the membership of the Church. Priesthood authority was removed from the earth because of the unrighteousness of the people.

Light returned to the world through Joseph Smith when he received the First Vision in 1820. For a decade, the Prophet Joseph Smith was carefully pre-

pared to reestablish God's Church. He received priesthood authority—first the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist, then the Melchizedek Priesthood from Peter, James, and John. Revelations were given to Joseph as God's voice was heard from the heavens. A communication link between God and His prophet was restored.

As a small congregation gathered on April 6 of 1830 to organize the Church, the Prophet Joseph Smith asked those present if they were willing to accept him and Oliver Cowdery as their teachers and special advisers. Those present raised their hands in support.

"Although they had previously received the Melchizedek Priesthood, [Joseph and Oliver] then ordained each other to the office of elder. They did this to signify that they were elders in the newly organized church. The sacrament of the Lord's supper was administered next. . . . Joseph and Oliver then confirmed those who had previously been baptized as members of the Church of Jesus Christ and bestowed upon them the gift of the Holy Ghost" (*Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 67–68).

What a tremendous privilege it is to be numbered among those who, by the power of the priesthood, have been baptized by water and then have had hands laid upon their heads and received the Holy Ghost.

Elder LeGrand Richards, describing the gift of the Holy Ghost, said:

"To me, the gift of the Holy Ghost is as important to man as sunshine and water are to the plants. You take them away, and the plants would die. You take the Holy Ghost out of this Church, and this Church would not be any different than any other church. And it is manifest in so many ways in the lives and the devotion of the members of the Church" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, 109; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 76).

## Experience with heeding the Holy Spirit

Gifts have only limited value unless they are used. The Holy Ghost will be our constant companion if we submit ourselves to the will of our Father in Heaven, always remembering Him and keeping His commandments.

I remember a critical time in my life and how grateful I was when a still, small voice gave me direction to make an important decision. I had been with a retail firm for a number of years. We had enjoyed extraordinary success. We wanted to expand the business but needed a great deal of capital. In an attempt to raise the money, we contacted the best financial advisers we could find. They encouraged us to merge with a larger firm. The merger was successfully completed, and I was asked to sign a five-year contract to give continuity to management. Within a matter of months I found myself in a very difficult situation. The new owners wanted me to violate a trust that I felt I just could not do. After long discussions, they continued to insist and I continued to refuse. Seeing there was no way to break the deadlock, I agreed to leave the company. The timing for me was devastating. I had a wife who was seriously ill and required a lot of medical attention, a daughter away to college, and a son on a mission. I spent the next year just getting enough consulting work to pay my expenses.

After struggling for about one year, a company called me from California and invited me to come out and talk to them about working for them. I went out and negotiated a very good contract; I was delighted with the opportunity. I told them that I had to return home and discuss it with my family before I could give an answer. I returned home and after a careful discussion, I convinced my family that it was the right thing to do. In the process of calling the firm to accept the offer, a voice just as strong and powerful as I have ever heard came to me

and said, "Say no to the offer." I could not ignore the voice, so I turned the offer down, but I was distressed. I could not comprehend why I had been told to do such a thing. I went upstairs to my bedroom, sat on the bed, opened the scriptures, and they fell open to the Doctrine and Covenants, section 111. This was the only section given in the state of Massachusetts, where my home was at that particular time. These words literally jumped out of the page and met my eye:

"Concern not yourselves about your debts, . . . I will give you power to pay them. . . .

"Tarry in this place, and in the regions round about" (D&C 111:5, 7).

A great peace came to my soul. Within just a few days I was offered a fine position in Boston. A few months later I had the great privilege of hosting a conference in which President Harold B. Lee, then First Counselor in the First Presidency, was the featured speaker. The conference was a glorious success as we feasted on the words of President Lee. The following July, President Joseph Fielding Smith passed away and President Lee became the prophet. Three months later I was asked to come to Salt Lake, where I received a call to leave my profession and join the General Authorities.

I have often wondered what would have happened if I had not heeded the Holy Spirit in its counseling me not to leave Boston.

### What the Holy Ghost can mean to us

Parley P. Pratt gave us a vision of what the gift of the Holy Ghost could mean to us when he said:

"The gift of the Holy Ghost . . . quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions and affections; and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires, develops,

cultivates and matures all the fine-toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness and charity. It develops beauty of person, form and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation and social feeling. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens, and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being" (*Key to the Science of Theology*, 9th ed. [1965], 101).

I bear witness of the power and comfort the gift of the Holy Ghost is to those who live worthy of it. What a reassurance it is for us to know that we are not left alone to find the course that we must follow to merit the eternal blessings of our Father in Heaven. We do not need man-made rating systems to determine what we should read, what we should watch, what we should listen to, or how we should conduct our lives. What we do need to do is live worthy of the continued companionship of the Holy Ghost and have the courage to follow the promptings that come into our lives. May the Lord bless us that we may ever be mindful of this great and precious gift, even the gift of the Holy Ghost, I humbly pray in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "How Great the Wisdom and the Love."

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### President Monson

Thank you, Elder Perry. We just heard from Elder Perry, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Note please, the presence of Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who spoke yesterday morning. We are just delighted to have him here. Our hearts go out today in

prayer for the quick recovery of Brother James Paramore, who has had surgery.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Stay "on the boat"

Early in our married life when Sister Nelson and I lived in Minneapolis, we decided to enjoy a free afternoon with our two-year-old daughter. We went to one of Minnesota's many beautiful lakes and rented a small boat. After rowing far from shore, we stopped to relax and enjoy the tranquil scene. Suddenly, our little toddler lifted one leg out of the boat and started to go overboard, exclaiming, "Time to get out, Daddy!"

Quickly we caught her and explained, "No, dear, it's not time to get out; we must stay in the boat until it brings us safely back to land." Only with considerable persuasion did we succeed in convincing her that leaving the boat early would have led to disaster.

Children are prone to do such dangerous things simply because they have not acquired the wisdom their parents have. Similarly, we as children of our Heavenly Father may foolishly want to get "out of the boat" before we arrive at destinations He would like us to reach. The Lord teaches over and over that we are to endure<sup>1</sup> to the end.<sup>2</sup> This is a dominant theme of the scriptures. One example may serve to represent many passages that convey a similar message:

"Blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion . . . , for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb."<sup>3</sup>

He will be followed by Sister Elaine L. Jack. She and her counselors were released yesterday as the Relief Society general presidency.

Blessings bestowed by God are always predicated upon obedience to law.<sup>4</sup> Applied to my analogy, we are first to get "on the boat" with Him. Then we are to *stay* with Him. And if we don't get "out of the boat" before we should, we shall reach His kingdom, where we will be lifted up to eternal life.

### If we endure, we will be lifted up

The term *lifted up* relates to a physical law that can be illustrated by a simple demonstration.<sup>5</sup> I will use a spool of thread and blow into the axial hole of the spool. The force of my breath will move a piece of tissue paper away from me. Next I will take an ordinary card and a straight pin. I will place the pin through the card. With the pin in the hole of the spool, I will hold the card close to the spool. I will again blow into the hole of the spool. As I blow, I will let go of the card so that it can respond to physical forces. Before I proceed, would you like to predict what will happen? Will I blow the card away from me, or will the card be lifted up toward me? Are you ready? [Elder Nelson demonstrates that blowing down the axial hole of the spool lifts the card up toward the spool.]

Did you notice? As long as I had sufficient breath, the card was lifted up. But when I could endure no longer, the card fell. When my breath gave out, the opposing force of gravity prevailed. If my energy could have endured, the card would have been lifted up indefinitely.<sup>6</sup>

Energy is always required to provide lift over opposing forces. These same laws apply in our personal lives. Whenever an undertaking is begun, both the energy and the will to endure are essential. The winner of a five-kilometer race is declared at the end of *five* kilometers, not at one or two. If you board a bus to Boston, you don't get off at Burlington. If you want to gain an education, you don't drop out along the way—just as you don't pay to dine at an elegant restaurant only to walk away after sampling the salad.

Whatever your work may be, endure at the beginning, endure through opposing forces along the way, and endure to the end. Any job must be completed before you can enjoy the result for which you are working. So wrote the poet:

Stick to your task till it sticks to you;  
Beginners are many, but enders are few.

Honor, power, place, and praise  
Will [always] come . . . to the one  
who stays.

Stick to your task till it sticks to you;  
Bend at it, sweat at it, smile at it too;  
For out of the bend and the sweat  
and the smile

Will come life's victories, after  
awhile.<sup>7</sup>

Sometimes the need to endure comes when facing a physical challenge. Anyone afflicted with a serious illness or with the infirmities of age hopes to be able to endure to the end of such trials.<sup>8</sup> Most often, intense physical challenges are accompanied by spiritual challenges as well.

### **To endure, we must be surely converted**

Think of the early pioneers. What if they had not endured the hardships of their westward migration? There would be no sesquicentennial celebration this year. Steadfastly they endured—through

persecution,<sup>9</sup> expulsion,<sup>10</sup> a governmental order of extermination,<sup>11</sup> expropriation of property,<sup>12</sup> and much more. Their enduring faith in the Lord provided lift for them as it will for you and for me.

The Lord's ultimate concern is for the salvation and exaltation of each individual soul. What if the Apostle Paul's conversion had not been enduring? He never would have testified as he did at the end of his ministry: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."<sup>13</sup>

What if Jesus had wavered in His commitment to do His Father's will?<sup>14</sup> His Atonement would not have been accomplished. The dead would not be resurrected. The blessings of immortality and eternal life would not be.<sup>15</sup> But Jesus did endure. During His final hour, Jesus prayed to His Father, saying, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have *finished* the work which thou gavest me to do."<sup>16</sup>

Early in His mortal ministry, Jesus became concerned about the commitment of His followers. He had just fed the 5,000,<sup>17</sup> then had taught them the doctrines of the kingdom. But some had murmured, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?"<sup>18</sup> Even after He had fed them, many lacked the faith to endure with Him. He turned to the Twelve and said, "Will ye also go away?"

"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, . . . thou hast the words of eternal life.

"And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."<sup>19</sup>

Peter's answer defines the real core of commitment. When we know without a doubt that Jesus is the Christ, we will want to stay with Him. When we are surely converted, the power to endure is ours.

### **Enduring in the covenant of marriage**

This power to endure is critical in those two most important relationships

we enter into in life. One is marriage; the other is membership in the Lord's Church. These are also unique in that they are both covenant—not contractual—relationships.

Marriage, especially temple marriage, and family ties involve covenant relationships. They cannot be regarded casually. With divorce rates escalating throughout the world today, it is apparent that many spouses are failing to endure to the end of their commitments to each other. And some temple marriages fail because a husband forgets that his highest and most important priesthood duty is to honor and sustain his wife.<sup>20</sup> The best thing that a father can do for his children is to "love their mother."<sup>21</sup>

President Gordon B. Hinckley made a statement recently that each Latter-day Saint husband should heed: "Magnify your [wife]," he said, "and in so doing you will magnify your priesthood."<sup>22</sup> To his profound advice we might couple the timeless counsel of Paul, who said, "Let every one of you . . . love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."<sup>23</sup> Enduring love provides enduring lift through life's trials. An enduring marriage results when both husband and wife regard their union as one of the two most important commitments they will ever make.

### **Enduring in our covenants with God**

The other commitment of everlasting consequence is to the Lord.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, some souls make a covenant with God—signified by the sacred ordinance of baptism—without a heartfelt commitment to endure with Him. Baptism is an extremely important ordinance. But it is only initiatory. The supreme benefits of membership in the Church can be realized only through the exalting ordinances of the temple. These blessings qualify us for "thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers"<sup>25</sup> in the celestial kingdom.

The Lord can readily discern between those with superficial signs of activity and those who are deeply rooted in His Church. This Jesus taught in the parable of the sower. He observed that some "have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended."<sup>26</sup>

Loyalty to the Lord carries an obligation of loyalty to those called by the Lord to lead His Church. He has empowered that men be ordained to speak in His holy name.<sup>27</sup> As they guide His unsinkable boat safely toward the shore of salvation, we would do well to stay on board with them.<sup>28</sup> "No waters can swallow the ship where lies / The Master of ocean and earth and skies."<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, some individuals want to jump "out of the boat" before reaching land. And others, sadly, are persuaded out by companions who insist that they know more about life's perilous journey than do prophets of the Lord. Problems often arise that are not of your own making. Some of you may innocently find yourselves abandoned by one you trusted. But you will never be forsaken by your Redeemer, who said, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say."<sup>30</sup>

Without a strong commitment to the Lord, an individual is more prone to have a low level of commitment to a spouse. Weak commitments to eternal covenants lead to losses of eternal consequence. Laments later in life are laced with remorse, as expressed in these lines:

For of all sad words of tongue or pen,  
The saddest are these: "It might have been!"<sup>31</sup>

We are speaking of the most important of all blessings. The Lord said, "If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal

life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.”<sup>32</sup>

### Proper priorities help us endure

Each of you who really wants to endure to the glorious end that our Heavenly Father has foreseen should firmly establish some personal priorities. With many interests competing for your loyalty, you need to be careful first to stay safely “on the boat.” No one can serve two masters.<sup>33</sup> If Satan can get you to love anything—fun, flirtation, fame, or fortune—more than a spouse or the Lord with whom you have made sacred covenants to endure, the adversary begins to triumph. When faced with such temptations, you will find that strength comes from commitments made well in advance. The Lord said, “Settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you.”<sup>34</sup> He declared through His prophet Jeremiah, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”<sup>35</sup>

When priorities are proper, the power to endure is increased. And when internalized, those priorities will help keep you from “going overboard.” They will protect you from cheating—in marriage, in the Church, and in life.

If you really want to *be* like the Lord—more than *anything* or *anyone* else—you will remember that your adoration of Jesus is best shown by your emulation of Him. Then you will not allow any other love to become more important than love for your companion, your family, and your Creator. You will govern yourself not by someone else’s set of rules but by revealed principles of truth.

### The Lord will help us endure

Your responsibility to endure is uniquely yours. But you are never alone.

I testify that the lifting power of the Lord can be yours if you will “come unto Christ” and “be perfected in him.” You will “deny yourselves of all ungodliness.” And you will “love God with all your might, mind and strength.”<sup>36</sup>

The living prophet of the Lord has issued a clarion call: “I invite every one of you,” said President Hinckley, “to stand on your feet and with a song in your heart move forward, living the gospel, loving the Lord, and building the kingdom. Together we shall *stay* the course and *keep* the faith.”<sup>37</sup>

I pray that each of us may so endure and be lifted up at the last day, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. The word *endure* comes from two Latin roots. The prefix *en* means “within.” The remainder comes from the verb *durare*, which means “to be firm or solid.” Thus, to *endure* means “to become firm within yourself.” That meaning carries into the original languages of the Bible.

In the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, the root word *aman* means “to render firm” or “to be faithful, to trust.” It was often translated as “faithful,” but never as “faith” alone. *Aman* meant more than faith. It was not a passive term; it meant “a firm resolve to be faithful.” *Aman* was also the Hebrew root for words that were translated into related terms, such as “verified,” “believe,” “long continuance,” “assurance,” “establish(ed),” “sure,” “trust,” “steadfast,” “stand fast,” and others.

In the Greek language of the New Testament, the verb *hupoméno* was used. It means “to remain,” “stay,” or “continue.” *Hupo* (or *hypo*) means “under,” as in *hypodermic* (“under the skin”) or *hypothermia* (“low temperature”). To *endure* connotes a commitment *within* one’s soul.

2. See Matthew 24:13; Mark 13:13; 2 Nephi 33:4; Omni 1:26; 3 Nephi 15:9; D&C 14:7; 18:22; 20:29. This promise has been confirmed by both our Father in Heaven and by the Lord Jesus Christ. From the great Elohim, we have this pronouncement: "The words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (2 Nephi 31:15). And from the Savior, we have this promise: "Whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, . . . him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world" (3 Nephi 27:16).
3. 1 Nephi 13:37; see also Mosiah 23:22; Alma 13:29; 36:3; 37:37; 38:5; 3 Nephi 27:21–22; Ether 4:19; D&C 5:35; 9:14; 17:8; 75:16. For additional emphasis, scriptures teach the negative consequences of disobedience to this commandment. For example, "If they will not repent and believe in his name, and be baptized in his name, and endure to the end, they must be damned; for the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has spoken it" (2 Nephi 9:24; see also 2 Nephi 31:16; Mormon 9:29).
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
5. This demonstration of Bernoulli's principle in physics was first shown to the author on 17 August 1996 by Elder Norman C. Boehm, then an Area Authority of the Church residing in Sacramento, California.
6. The law of lift is at work whenever airplanes fly. It is a "component of the total aerodynamic force acting on an airfoil or on an entire aircraft or winged missile perpendicular to the relative wind and normally exerted in an upward direction, opposing the pull of gravity" (*American Heritage Dictionary* 3rd ed. [1992], "lift," 1040).
7. "Stick to Your Task," in Jack M. Lyon and others, eds., *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People* (1996), 255–56.
8. In his 95th year, President Joseph Fielding Smith publicly expressed the hope that he would be able "to endure to the end in this life" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 92; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970, 27). He who served so faithfully and well all of his days provided a model for all of us to follow.
9. See Joseph Smith—History 1:20, 22–24, 27, 58, 60–61, 74.
10. The pioneers were driven from Ohio to Missouri to Illinois and finally to the valley of the Great Salt Lake.
11. The early pioneers were forced out of Missouri under threat of an order signed by Missouri's governor directing that the "Mormons must be treated as enemies and *must be exterminated* or driven from the state" (*History of the Church*, 3:175).
12. In 1887, the Congress of the USA took the unprecedented step of eliminating the Church's legal existence by revoking its corporate charter and authorizing federal receivers to assume ownership of virtually all of the Church's property and other assets, including its most sacred houses of worship—temples—in Logan, Manti, St. George, and Salt Lake City (see *The Late Corporation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints v. United States*, 136 U.S. 1 [1890]).
13. 2 Timothy 4:7.
14. See 3 Nephi 27:13.
15. See Moses 1:39.
16. John 17:4; italics added. See also John 4:34.
17. See Matthew 14:21; 16:9; Mark 6:44; 8:19; Luke 9:14; John 6:10.
18. John 6:60.
19. John 6:67–69.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 42:22.
21. This statement has been made by many leaders of the Church. For example, see Howard W. Hunter, in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50; David O. McKay, as quoted by Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference



- Report, Oct. 1982, 112; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 77.
22. First session of member fireside conference in Lima, Peru, 9 Nov. 1996.
  23. Ephesians 5:33.
  24. In addition, worthy men are privileged to qualify for the oath and covenant of the priesthood, which will bless all men, women, and children whom they serve (see D&C 84:33–48).
  25. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
  26. Mark 4:17.
  27. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; 21:5; 68:4.
  28. See Acts 27:30–31; 1 Nephi 18:21–23.
  29. “Master, the Tempest Is Raging,” *Hymns*, no. 105.
  30. Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
  31. John Greenleaf Whittier, “Maud Muller,” *The Complete Poetical Works of Whittier* (1892), 48.
  32. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7. The Prophet Joseph included this concept of endurance in the thirteenth article of faith: “We have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things.”
  33. See Matthew 6:24.
  34. Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28.
  35. Jeremiah 31:33.
  36. Moroni 10:32.
  37. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 96; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 72; italics added.

## Sister Elaine L. Jack

### Laying a small stone at the gate of Relief Society

I grew up just a stone's throw from the Alberta Temple in Cardston, Canada. In this small Mormon community at the foot of the Canadian Rockies, a temple stood as a powerful symbol of the strength and grandeur of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I made my most meaningful covenants within the walls of that temple.

Those walls are very significant to me. My grandfather John F. Anderson, a skilled stonemason from Aberdeen, Scotland, was called to dress the white granite stone for this holy temple. In 1915 at the laying of the cornerstone, he had the honor of acting as the chief mason under the supervision of Elder David O. McKay. In 1923, before the temple was dedicated, my grandfather laid the very last stone. Then, in his journal he recorded, “It was not the capstone, but a small stone at the front gate entrance.”

Today, I lay my small stone at the front gate entrance of Relief Society.

In the book of Omni, itself a small stone in the middle of the Book of Mormon, Amaleki writes: “I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, . . . and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved” (Omni 1:26).

The Prophet Joseph Smith described offering “your whole soul” as serving God with all your “heart, might, mind and strength” (D&C 4:2). It is to put on the altar of God your time, talents, gifts and blessings, your willingness to serve, to do all that He asks. My grandfather offered to the Lord the stone he had placed so carefully. Today, I offer my years of service in the general Relief Society.

In 1991, at the invitation of President Hinckley, I returned to my childhood home in Canada to attend the rededication of the Alberta Temple. I will always remember the power that

filled the room as the session concluded and we stood to sing, "The Spirit of God like a fire is burning!" My heart was touched by the familiar words: "We'll sing and we'll shout with the armies of heaven, / Hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb!" ("The Spirit of God," *Hymns*, no. 2). Hosanna is a righteous shout for joy, and this was a joyous occasion!

To our chorus the choir added the great "Hosannah Anthem." The words were meaningful then as I reflected on my grandfather's work to build the walls of that noble temple: "The house of the Lord is completed. May our offering by Him be accepted" (in *The Choirbook* [1980], 70). They strike me even more dramatically today as I complete my "house" for the Lord.

### **This Relief Society presidency has been building**

I find many parallels with building a temple and fulfilling a calling. We begin with bare ground, and we start to work. We survey the situation, pray for inspiration, thoughtfully formulate plans, send them for review, adjust, and plan again. We firm up a foundation and then add walls, a roof, and even gardens. Each administration builds on the solid bedrock of the past.

For the past seven years this Relief Society presidency has been building. We have added a Churchwide literacy effort to our education focus; we have emphasized the principle of watching over and caring for our sisters through visiting teaching; we have continued to place home and family at the center of our attention and honored the divine nature of women as they nurture, sacrifice, teach, and inspire. Wonderful things have happened because of the women of this Church, who have tended children and tended each other, taught self-reliance and taught of the Savior.

How I have loved working so closely with the wonderful women of this

Church as they have offered their souls to the Lord. To their stones, I add my own. I pray that it may be accepted.

### **"Something extraordinary"**

One of my prized memories of these past few years was the sesquicentennial in 1992, when we celebrated the founding of Relief Society, one of the oldest, largest, and, in my eyes, the most successful women's organizations in the world. It is still thrilling for me to remember the simultaneous broadcast to every continent of the world, linking sisters for the first time from Taiwan, Zimbabwe, Germany, Mexico, Korea, Australia, and America.

Emma Smith, the first president of this organization, said to the sisters, "We are going to do something extraordinary" (Minutes of the Female Relief Society, 17 Mar. 1842, 7, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). Our celebration was indeed "something extraordinary." What began in 1842 with 20 women in Nauvoo, Illinois, now involves nearly four million women on every continent and in almost every country in the world. But what is significant is that it began with one woman, Margaret Cook, who offered to sew shirts for the men working on the Nauvoo Temple. She needed cloth and could not afford to buy it. Sarah Kimball offered the cloth, and within weeks the Relief Society was organized by the Prophet Joseph Smith under the inspiration of the Lord. It began with a small offering—at the front gate—and it has grown to a major force for good around the world, one stone at a time.

### **The Lord helps us prepare our offerings**

One of the things I recognize is that if we are obedient, faithful, and earnest, the Lord helps us prepare our offerings. We learn this from Nephi, who was told, "Thou shalt construct a ship, after the

manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters" (1 Nephi 17:8). Nephi was not from a seaside community; he had never built a boat. But his response was so full of faith and accountability: "Lord, whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools to construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?" (1 Nephi 17:9). Without hesitation or question, Nephi began to prepare an offering to the Lord in the shape of a ship.

When I was called to serve in this assignment, I, like Nephi, went to the Lord for help. My tools came in the form of two strong and capable counselors, Chieko Okazaki and Aileen Clyde. As a presidency we have been fortunate to have a board of 12 noble women, whose contribution has reflected dedication and skill, and an office staff, whose service has been generously and patiently given. Together, we have done "this work with holiness of heart" (Mosiah 18:12). And we have been blessed with the prayers and goodness of Relief Society women in all parts of the world, good women who take seriously the Lord's charge, "Be not weary in well-doing" (D&C 64:33).

### Expressions of gratitude

I want to express my gratitude to the many priesthood leaders who have counseled and directed us. They have needed our confidence and support just as we have needed their understanding and priesthood power. The Lord has called men of valor, wisdom, and heart to lead this Church. I have seen God inspire our leaders; I have seen them act decisively, compassionately, and carefully. I trust them; they have trusted us.

I know I speak for the women of this Church when I say to President Hinckley, President Monson, President Faust, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, we stand by you, we support you, we

know you are latter-day prophets with the keys to the kingdom of God.

I also pay tribute to my husband, Joe, who has blessed me with his steadiness, his sense of humor and good judgment, and his righteous hands. My four sons have followed his lead as loyal supporters. I took it as the ultimate compliment when one of them said, "We've been training Mom to be a Relief Society president for a long time, and she finally got it right!"

### Look forward with hope

Our offerings embrace both the work we do and the heart with which we do it. The Lord calls this "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20). This union constitutes the soul. Amaleki spoke of offering "your whole souls" to Jesus Christ (Omni 1:26). Brothers and sisters, the time is past when we can merely believe in this gospel; we must be passionate in our belief and in our commitment to Jesus Christ and His plan. We must know, unequivocally, that He is with us, that He will guide and direct us. In His name we shape our offering. For the past few years I have represented all the women of this Church, a far-reaching responsibility. I believe that the Lord will measure my efforts by my heart and my spirit, as He does yours.

Today, Relief Society represents the hope expressed by President Emmeline B. Wells, who served in the early years of this century. Her guidance had helped Relief Society hold fast to its cherished traditions while going forward with faith in God and hope in the future. Fifty years later President Belle Spafford said, "Relief Society is only on the threshold of its divine mission" (in *History of Relief Society, 1842-1966* [1966], 140). Today, we are ready to step over that threshold into a new dimension of spirituality and light. I look forward with a perfect brightness of hope to the offerings of Relief Society sisters in the new century

that is before us. Our joy in the gospel of Jesus Christ and our place in His plan will draw people to us and change lives. We will lift and inspire a world so desperately in need of goodness. This new presidency will build an even greater sense of purpose and contribution. I commit my full support to President Smoot and her counselors as they add new stones to the building of the kingdom of God. Surely the strength of today will serve as a foundation upon which the women of tomorrow will build.

This Church has been built and will continue to grow through the steady efforts of the members who quietly do their part, who are struggling with daily challenges, who are humble, patient, and long-suffering. These are the hearts that fill with joy when they sing in dedication of their own offerings, "The Lord is extending the Saints' understanding" (*Hymns*, no. 2).

My heart is full of gratitude and great joy. Rejoice with me in bearing

testimony of the Savior: "Hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb." In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us. He was followed by Sister Elaine L. Jack, who was released yesterday as the president of the Relief Society of the Church. I think she's going to continue as a member of Relief Society all the days of her life. She's converted.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "How Firm a Foundation."

Then we will hear from Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

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The choir and congregation sang "How Firm a Foundation."

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## Bishop H. David Burton

All of our lives have been blessed through the great service of Sister Jack and her counselors. I'm sure I represent each of you in expressing our thanks.

### The parable of the good Samaritan

Faithful disciples following the Savior heard gospel principles taught by thought-provoking short stories known as parables. After hearing many parables, "the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" (Matthew 13:10). The Savior responded, "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matthew 13:13).

A lawyer chose to challenge the Savior on a point of doctrine. Attempting to

entrap Jesus, he asked, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). Jesus responded with a question of His own: "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). The response of the lawyer, as recited from the law, was perfect: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:27). Jesus acknowledged the answer and then replied, "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:28).

Having failed to confound the Master, the lawyer was embarrassed. He sought justification by making a further inquiry: "And who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). We should be very grateful for the lawyer's second question.

From it came one of the most insightful of the Savior's parables.

You remember the setting: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, . . . leaving him half dead" (Luke 10:30). Since our Primary days, we have heard about this certain man. We wonder at the failure of the priest and the Levite to render aid, and we say: "Surely, I would have helped. Surely, I would have looked the other way."

The parable continues: "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him" (Luke 10:33).

The prophet Moroni was granted a vision of our day. The Book of Mormon record states:

"For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel . . . more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted. . . .

"Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?" (Mormon 8:37, 39).

Moroni was troubled by what he saw. Are we troubled enough to set aside our love of substance and hear the cry of the hungry, the needy, the naked, and the sick? Can we say, "I would have responded if I had seen a person in need, as did the Samaritan?"

The parable continues: "And [he] went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (Luke 10:34). Upon completing the parable, the Savior asked the lawyer, "Which now of these three . . . was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?" (Luke 10:36).

He quickly identified the one who had shown mercy—the kind and caring

traveler from Samaria. Jesus admonished the lawyer to "*go, and do thou likewise*" (Luke 10:37; italics added).

### Modern-day Samaritans

May I tell you about several of the many Samaritans who are "pouring in oil and wine" to ease the plight of the needy around the world?

In March of 1996, a volunteer team consisting of a radiologist, two technicians, and a biomedical engineer installed a mammography machine and a film processor in a hospital in Poland. The equipment was purchased by the Church with funds generously contributed for humanitarian assistance. Physicians and technologists came from area hospitals to be trained in the use of the machines. Since observing the benefits of the machines, the Polish government has purchased 45 more. Many lives will be saved and much suffering avoided by early detection of abnormalities.

Cambodia has suffered nearly 30 years of war. Thousands perished, and survivors have experienced misery and deprivation. In 1994, following an emergency food donation by the Church, an offer was extended to assist Cambodians in becoming more self-reliant in basic food production and processing. Several skilled volunteer couples have established a small cannery and a poultry feed mill. Technical courses have been developed and taught to many. A new era in agriculture is being born through the unselfish efforts of modern good Samaritans.

Many of us regularly "*go, and do . . . likewise*" when we dispatch our surplus clothing to Deseret Industries. In 1996, over 8.5 million pounds of clothing were sorted and distributed to those in great need. Much clothing has been sent to needy populations in Russia—coats to provide warmth in freezing weather; gloves to prevent frostbite; dresses, shirts, and sweaters. A Russian official

wrote, "We do thank God and each one of you for the great help you have been to our people."

### Providing in the Lord's way

The prophet Alma, in describing his day, said, "They did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted" (Alma 1:27). Even when they prospered, "they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst . . . ; they were liberal to all, . . . whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need" (Alma 1:30).

Good Samaritanism is contagious. Providing in the Lord's way humbles the rich, exalts the poor, and sanctifies both (see D&C 104:15-18). The giver helps those in need by sharing what he has received. The receiver accepts the offering with gratitude. As the receiver rises to his full potential, he then is able to reach out to help others.

Good Samaritanism starts in the home as parents teach children by example and precept. Acts of assistance, kindness, and concern among family members reinforce the desire to "*go, and do thou likewise*."

### "Go, and do thou likewise"

Tucked away in the Uintah Basin of eastern Utah are several small communities. Jedadiah lives in one of these friendly towns. He is a handsome, blond 11-year-old. Jeddy loves academics and is extremely interested in sports. He is excited to soon be eligible to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. Jeddy's body cannot do the many things that he would like it to do. The cystic fibrosis that exists in his lungs makes breathing rather difficult.

Amanda, Jeddy's big sister, is a lovely 16-year-old who displays her love

for him in a host of ways. She is a source of comfort when times are difficult. She is his link to school, seeing that assignments are brought home daily. A neighbor said, "Amanda is a real heroine in her family." She understands the significance of "*go, and do thou likewise*." Jeddy travels to Salt Lake City only to go to the hospital. For a special reason he is looking forward to October general conference. It is a family tradition that Grandfather takes his grandsons to Salt Lake for general conference following their 12th birthday. Jeddy can hardly wait; neither can Grandpa.

Recently, a sweet 93-year-old sister joined her eternal companion on the other side of the veil. They were blessed with four devoted children. This couple shared their musical talents on thousands of occasions. Many saddened spirits were uplifted in times of mourning as these "good Samaritans" blended their voices in strains of hope and encouragement. Many children will feel the love of the Savior as they sing Primary songs composed by this sweet sister. As her health declined, loving children spent much time and energy and emotion in meeting her needs. A valiant daughter devoted herself to her mother's care. They will continue to "*go, and do thou likewise*."

In a mountain valley, a small community is the home of a monastery with a declining number of aging monks. A stake Relief Society president, with many other compassionate service responsibilities, regularly checks on the well-being of the monks. She is the first to deliver goodies on days when they are permissible. She cares about their welfare just as she does about the members of her stake.

Bishops regularly call upon volunteer labor to grow and process commodities to fill bishops' storehouses. Last year, nearly 270,000 days of labor were volunteered in keeping shelves

filled and available for use by bishops. Many of us have fond remembrances of our time volunteering on welfare projects. I can still hear a farm manager's cries of anguish as he observed the damage done to several acres of sugar beets because we had mistaken newly emerging beet plants for weeds. The blessings we received for our service turned out to be a "Scotch blessing."

President Monson said, "We have a responsibility to extend help as well as hope to the hungry, to the homeless, and to the downtrodden both at home and abroad" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1990, 3; or *Ensign*, May 1990, 4).

### **The resources of the Lord's storehouse**

Picture a small, one-room apartment which is home for a family of six. The room is dirty and cluttered. The family has not been to church in years.

As the ward welfare committee discussed the family's needs, there was a feeling of discouragement, for bishops, over the years, had helped the family often. In the discussion, a new idea began to dawn. Perhaps, if the committee called upon the resources of the Lord's storehouse—the talents and skills of ward members—even this difficult situation could be assisted.

The committee first focused on future possibilities as well as immediate needs. As possibilities turned to reality, hope and optimism replaced gloom and depression. Filled with hope, the family committed to help improve their own situation. The committee also went to work. A hairstylist gave the family haircuts. A dentist volunteered, and for the first time in years, a mother was not embarrassed to smile. A new pair of glasses allowed this mother to once again read to her children. A financial specialist worked with the family in budgeting their funds. A three-year-old received much needed physical therapy.

Slowly the family began to believe their life could be different. The apartment, once dirty and disorganized, began to show signs of order and cleanliness. Curtains went up on the windows. Just a year later, invitations were extended by this family to an open house for their three-bedroom home.

A wounded family was found by the side of the road, a family suffering just as much as the traveler from Jerusalem in Jesus' day. The family's cries were heard, and their wounds were bound. The modern "good Samaritans" followed the divine injunction to "*go, and do thou likewise.*" Spiritual lives were also rescued. Today, this family is active in the Church and preparing to receive the blessings of the temple.

### **Relieving suffering is Christlike**

Bishops use consecrated fast offerings to supply needs beyond those which can be provided by the storehouse. President Hinckley suggested we think "of what would happen if the principles of [the] fast day and the fast offering were observed throughout the world. The hungry would be fed, the naked clothed, the homeless sheltered. . . . The giver would not suffer but would be blessed by his small abstinence. A new measure of concern and unselfishness would grow in the hearts of people everywhere" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 73; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 52–53).

To help relieve suffering is to cultivate a Christlike character. We are charged, as were those who listened at the feet of the Savior 2,000 years ago, to "*go, and do thou likewise.*" The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that it is our responsibility "to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or in any other, or in no church at all, wherever he finds them" (*Times and Seasons*, 15 Mar. 1842, 732).

May we be generous with our time and liberal in our contributions for the care of those who suffer. May we commit to the principles of Good Samaritanism and be ever mindful of the need to “go, and do thou likewise,” I pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

We have just listened to Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

Elder L. Edward Brown of the Seventy will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Robert D. Hales, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder L. Edward Brown

### God is our Father

As our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, met with His disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, He taught them a pattern for prayer. This prayer, which is known to us as the Lord's Prayer, deserves our thoughtful consideration (see Matthew 6:9–13; 3 Nephi 13:9–13).

The Lord counseled, or perhaps even commanded, “After this manner therefore pray ye” (Matthew 6:9). Now focus your minds, and your hearts, on how He began this noble prayer: “Our Father [who] art in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). What a stunning moment it was! What a revelation! “Our Father,” He declared, “Our Father.”

Oh, He could have chosen so many ways to begin the prayer: “O mighty Creator of heaven and earth, O mighty God who is omnipresent, omniscient, or omnipotent.” These grand titles contain grand and noble truths. But He taught in one single word, “Father,” so very much that we need to know, that indeed we long to know. God is our Father. And we are His children.

Prophets of God proclaim that “all human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny” (“The Family:

A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

As a child enjoys a satisfying and secure relationship with his or her own father, he or she can relate naturally to his or her Heavenly Father. The child senses that he is a child of God and that God is his Father. That feels normal and that feels right, because it is right. We so proclaim that “in the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). They knew Him then. They will naturally and intuitively know Him now. What a tragedy for an innocent child to be abused such that he or she would find it difficult to reach out to his or her Heavenly Father.

### The prayer of a young boy

Some years ago, some close friends of ours loaned us their cabin in Island Park, Idaho. When we arrived at the cabin, we found that the key that we had been given to unlock the front door didn't work. We tried to undo windows and pry open screens, all to no avail.

Suddenly our son Steven, who was about seven years old at the time, shouted to us that he had just successfully opened the front door. Steven, with a big grin on his face, was standing triumphantly inside the front doorway. I was amazed. I asked him how he did that.



He responded with wonderful, child-like spontaneity: "I bowed my head and prayed. When I looked up, my eyes spotted this big rock by the front steps, and I thought, 'There is a key under that rock.' And sure enough there it was." The prayer of a child had been heard. I thank the Lord for his mother, who had taught him to find keys in moments of crisis.

### **The Lord does communicate with us**

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I bear earnest and solemn witness to you that the Lord does communicate with us as individuals. Never, never fall victim to the heinous thought that He does not care for you, that He does not know you. That is a satanic lie, one designed to destroy you.

Just two weeks ago, I was sending E-mail, or electronic messages, through our personal computer in our apartment in Tokyo, Japan, to a nephew in China; a son in Pocatello, Idaho; and another nephew in Longview, Washington. In the midst of formulating these E-mail messages, a miracle occurred. Our son-in-law in Salt Lake City sent us an instant, on-screen E-mail message. He simply asked, "Are you there?" I immediately responded, "I am here." And we "spoke" with one another via the miracle of E-mail.

Of course, God can and does communicate with us. According to the Doctrine and Covenants, section 88, verses 6 to 13, there is a light which "proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space." There is a light "in all things." It gives "life to all things." It is the "law by which all things are governed, even the power of God." This light "giveth you light [and] is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings."

Our Father has a superb communication system through which He transmits messages and feelings. "Yea,

behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost . . . , which shall dwell in your heart. . . . This is the spirit of revelation" (D&C 8:2-3). He knows and communicates with His sheep and they hear His voice (see John 10:14-16).

### **We must pray in the name of Jesus Christ**

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us to pray and covenants that answers will be forthcoming. "Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name," He declares (3 Nephi 18:19). "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed" (3 Nephi 18:21).

Note His insistence that "ye must always pray . . . in my name." There is "no other name given . . . whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent" (Mosiah 3:17).

### **The power of the Savior's name**

We read this powerful account in the book of Moses, chapter 1. In verse 3, the Lord declares to Moses, "Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name; for I am without beginning of days or end of years; and is not this endless?" Moses must have been overwhelmed with that announcement. Imagine what he must have felt with the next declaration as recorded in verse 4 of the same chapter: The Lord says, "And, behold, thou art my son." This is the Lord God Almighty, and "Endless is [His] name," He declares. And then He says to Moses, "Thou art my son." What a moment. If the Lord were to appear to you, He would say the same thing.

Following the Lord's appearance to Moses, Satan appeared to him. He commanded Moses, saying, "Son of man, worship me" (Moses 1:12). Moses looked at Satan, and with confidence in the

Lord's recent revelation, he rebuked him, saying to Satan: "Who art thou? For behold, I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten; and where is thy glory, that I should worship thee?" (Moses 1:13).

Moses had learned something about himself. He was a son of God. Oh, how important it is that our children be reminded of this truth. And Moses commanded Satan to leave, but to no avail. And Satan was angry. Moses again commanded him to depart, and Satan cried and ranted upon the earth, again refusing to leave. (See Moses 1:18-19.)

Moses then realized that he had a major challenge on his hands. This was no ordinary person. He was fearsome, angry, and powerful. Moses wanted no part of this and commanded boldly: "Depart from me, Satan, for this one God only will I worship, which is the God of glory. And now Satan began to tremble, and the earth shook" (Moses 1:20-21).

Here was a power that was dark and bitter. How could Moses withstand such? In this great moment of crisis, "Moses received strength, and called upon God, saying: In the name of the Only Begotten, depart hence, Satan" (Moses 1:21). He now appealed to a power beyond his own. He tapped into a source of strength and authority through the Lord Jesus Christ, a power which Satan could not defy. "And it came to pass that Satan cried with a loud voice, with weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; and he departed hence, even from the presence of Moses, that he beheld him not" (Moses 1:22).

## Our prayers will be heard

Years ago, one of our colleagues shared this tender experience with us. His young daughter, Kim, had just learned to count. In fact, she could count all the way from one to ten. They were so excited they called Grandma. "Hi, Grandma. Do you want to hear me count?" Then she began to count, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen." Perhaps the Savior smiled and was pleased that Kim could count from one to ten.

When we use these sacred words, "in the name of Jesus Christ," they are much more than a way to get out of a prayer or out of a testimony or out of a talk. We are on holy ground, brothers and sisters. We are using a name most sublime, most holy, and most wonderful—the very name of the Son of God. We are now able to come unto the Father through His Beloved Son. What power and reassurance and peace come when we really pray in His name. This conclusion to the prayer may, in many ways, be the most important part of the prayer. We can appeal to the Father through His victorious Son with confidence that our prayers will be heard. We can ask and receive, we can seek and find and subsequently find the open door.

I testify to you in that holy name, even the name of Jesus Christ, that God is our Father. We are His children. Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son in the flesh. He is our beloved Savior and Redeemer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### The process of conversion

The Savior, as a caring friend, said to Peter, who had recently come to follow the Savior:

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art con-

verted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32).

What is this process of conversion that each son and daughter of God must experience if they are to help others return back into His presence?

The first seeds of conversion begin with an awareness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and a desire to know the truth concerning His restored Church. "Let this desire work in you" (Alma 32:27). A desire to know the truth is like a seed which grows in the fertile ground of faith, patience, diligence, and long-suffering (see Alma 32:27-41). There have been some miraculous conversions recorded in the scriptures. The miraculous conversion of Saul is one such example, illustrated when he asked two vital questions: "Who art thou, Lord? . . . [and] What wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:5-6). On occasion individuals can have such experiences, but for the most part, conversion happens over a period of time as study, prayer, experience, and faith help us to grow in our testimony and conversion.

When Abinadi fearlessly taught the gospel of Jesus Christ to the wicked King Noah and his priests, only Alma recognized the truth. Alma then had to demonstrate great faith in the words of Abinadi as he sought to bring about a mighty change of heart. This change of heart strengthened his conversion with a desire to forsake his sins. The conversion of each member of the Church is not unlike that of Alma (see Mosiah 17).

We come out of the world into the kingdom of God. In the conversion process, we experience repentance, which brings about humility and a broken heart and contrite spirit, preparing us for baptism, remission of sins, and receiving the Holy Ghost. Then, over time and through our faithfulness, we overcome trials and tribulations and endure to the end.

## **Learning to become a fellow citizen**

I think of what the first members of the Church left behind. Many had to leave their families and friends, their nation of birth, and many of their ways of life. They traveled across an ocean and walked across a great nation to come to Zion so that they might have the fellowship of the Saints.

It is no different today. When new members come out of the world into the kingdom of God, they leave much behind them. Oftentimes they too must leave behind friends and even family as well as social contacts and a way of life that is not compatible with the standards of the Church.

After baptism, the new member of the Church must learn how to become a fellow citizen with the Saints in the kingdom of God through study, prayer, member example, and nurturing. Each member of the Church is developing daily a deeper personal commitment, testimony, and conversion as they serve in their families and in Church callings.

Once in the kingdom of God as a newly baptized member, we honor the restored priesthood. Honoring the priesthood and being obedient in living the commandments are important elements in the conversion process. Adult male members receive the Aaronic Priesthood soon after baptism. After a period of time, if worthy, they should receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, and each individual in the family shares the blessings of the priesthood in the home. Women are welcomed and enjoy the blessings of sisterhood in the Relief Society. Youth develop friendships as they associate in the Young Men and Young Women organizations. The children are blessed as they are taught and feel the love of caring teachers in the Primary.

Our obedience to the commandments leads us to service and sacrifice in

accepting callings in the priesthood quorums and the auxiliary organizations.

We faithfully progress for at least one year after baptism and prepare ourselves to enter the temple of the Lord. In the holy temple we receive our sacred endowments, which teach us how we must live to return into the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Then we are sealed for time and all eternity. Our children come into the world protected, born in the eternal covenants we have taken together as husband and wife. If we enter the waters of baptism after our family is grown, our children are sealed to us as though they were born in the covenant.

All of this time our testimonies continue to grow, and as they do they become a protection for us "that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, . . . it shall have no power over you" (Helaman 5:12).

Knowing the truth and gaining a testimony strengthen us to stay on the straight and narrow path that leads to eternal life. As testimony grows, we become more and more converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we follow Him, we commit ourselves to serve Him by serving others.

### **Provide the soil that nurtures the seed**

Brothers and sisters, the Church is growing rapidly as our missionary force introduces the gospel in all parts of the world to those who are prepared with ears to hear. They join the Church with great faith, with a testimony of Jesus Christ, with love in their hearts, and then they face the realities of reordering their lives to reflect the Lord's will. They lose the close association with the missionaries who brought them the light.

They come to our wards and branches feeling as though they are strangers. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fel-

lowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). We read in the scriptures about seeds and about the sower of seeds (see Matthew 13; Alma 32). We are taught that a seed can grow, become a tree, and bear fruit. But we have to have good soil to accept the good seed, and that is one of our roles in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—that we provide the soil which nurtures the seed so it can grow and bear fruit and the fruit remains (see John 15:16). Many are strong enough to endure to the end. Without receiving a warm hand of fellowship, some become discouraged and unfortunately may lose the spirit that brought them to the waters of baptism. What was once a centerpiece in their existence is pushed aside for what they may perceive to be an offense or more pressing matters of the day, or it is simply lost in the shuffle of living. To labor for the conversion of one's self and others is a noble and joyful task.

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

"And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!" (D&C 18:15–16).

### **Be aware of new members' needs**

Have you ever pondered the sorrow of losing one and what sadness there must be when many are lost? That is what the Lord feels. It is what our prophet feels. And that is what I hope that you and I can feel, that we can show a determination to nurture those who have experienced the joys of feeling the Spirit, being baptized, and gaining a testimony and who are in the process of overcoming trials and tribulations and

achieving an enduring conversion that will last eternally.

Amid the busyness of our day and concerns of what we are trying to accomplish in our individual lives and within our families, we sometimes are not aware of the needs of the new member who has just entered the kingdom. As we are committed to be by the side of each new member, could we walk with them along the straight and narrow path that leads to the temple, going with them to the temple so that in our friendship we can have joy and rejoice with them as we move together toward eternal life?

“Nevertheless, the people of the church did have great joy because of the conversion of the Lamanites, yea, because of the church of God, which had been established among them. And they did fellowship one with another, and did rejoice one with another, and did have great joy” (Helaman 6:3).

Visualize for a moment a shepherd tending his sheep. The shepherd is studying and praying diligently to get close to God. As the shepherd concentrates on his personal relationship with God, he loses track of time and circumstance. He is not aware of his sheep wandering away or being ravaged by evil marauders. The shepherd awakes from his personal pondering to the reality that some of his sheep are missing and he must go forth and find them, bringing them back.

We whose conversion is sufficient must reach out to those who wander. As we do, we will find great joy in gathering the Lord's sheep.

### **The example of Ammon**

Ammon, the Nephite missionary, provided an example for us. He had chosen to serve the Lamanite king and was sent to watch the flocks of Lamoni. When a band of renegades attacked and scattered the sheep, Ammon's fellow servants had fear and began to weep. What did Ammon say? “Be of good

cheer and let us go in search of the flocks, and we will gather them together and bring them back unto the place of water” (Alma 17:31).

Now, we may read this as a story about some shepherds trying to round up some missing sheep, but the message is much more powerful and significant than that. Ammon was a missionary with noble intentions to bring the king and his kingdom back to the fold of righteousness, to the well of living water. The challenge looked daunting to those who could see only, in everyday terms, sheep strung out on hillsides and not enough manpower to round them up. They were discouraged and fearful that the king would discover their loss.

Ammon not only led the force to recapture the sheep, he drove away the evil men who caused the problems; and his heroic efforts persuaded the king to follow him and to follow the Savior. Ammon teaches us that no matter our circumstances, we can be an example to others, we can lift them, we can inspire them to seek righteousness, and we can bear testimony to all of the power of Jesus Christ.

To become one in the family of Saints requires established members of the Church to warmly welcome new members with open arms. In like manner, it also requires a sincere effort on the part of new members to come to church and participate with the other members of the Church. Being one transcends gender, age, marital status, and economic standing.

### **Feed the Lord's sheep**

Conversion requires consecrating our lives to caring for and serving others who need our help and to sharing our gifts and talents. The Lord didn't say tend my sheep when it is convenient, watch my sheep when you aren't busy. He said feed my sheep and my lambs, help them survive this world, keep them

close to you. Lead them to safety—the safety of righteous choices that will prepare them for eternal life.

A member's challenge is similar to the many lessons that Jesus' disciples and Apostles learned after they responded to His sincere invitation to "come, follow me" (Luke 18:22). In the New Testament many lessons Peter, the senior Apostle, learned are shared with us because these are lessons we must also learn in our conversion process.

After the Crucifixion, Peter went fishing with the disciples. He was now the senior Apostle, but he did not realize what was expected of him. He had forgotten that he was to be a fisher of men. From the boat one of the fishermen recognized the resurrected Lord on the shore. Peter bounded ashore to greet the Savior and was met with a direct question that plumbed the depths of his conversion. Peter was still learning, as we must continue to learn. "Lovest thou me?" asked the Savior three times (John 21:15–17). "Lovest thou me?" Peter was hurt and taken aback. "Thou knowest that I love thee," he replied (John 21:17). Then counseled the Savior, "Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep" (John 21:15–17).

Like Peter, many are converted and leave the things of this world to follow the Lord. Like Peter, when we are called to be fishers of Father's children, do we go "a fishing" (John 21:3) and forget to feed His lambs and sheep? Like Peter, when those around us are suffering or feeling fearful and need our fellowship and help, do we sleep at the garden gate? (see Matthew 26:36–46).

Like Peter, as we have our own individual learning experiences, will we be able to respond in the same manner Peter did when the Lord asked him, "But whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter, now converted, answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:15–16).

### **"Strengthen thy brethren"**

Brothers and sisters, do we really understand the teachings of the Savior, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren"? (Luke 22:32). Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep. Feeding the lambs could well be missionary labors working with newly baptized members, who must be nurtured and given caring warmth and fellowship in the family of Saints. Feeding the sheep could well refer to the mature members of the Church, some active and some less active, who need to be cared for and brought back to the flock.

We have learned well the message of one prophet, "Every member [is] a missionary!" (David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 122). Hopefully, we will respond to an equally urgent plea that every member be a friend, a fellow-shipper, nurturing and caring for all our brothers and sisters—fully active members, new members, and less-active members alike.

Last night in priesthood meeting we received an entreaty from President Hinckley regarding our new members. He urgently petitioned us to care for our new members with these statements: "I ask of you, each of you, to become a part of this great effort. . . . Brethren, let us help them as they take their first steps as members. . . . [This] is a work for home teachers and visiting teachers. It is a work for the bishopric, for the priesthood quorums, for the Relief Society, the young men and young women, even the Primary. . . . Your friendly ways are needed. . . . That one who was lost need not have become lost. But if he is out . . . somewhere in the shadows, and if it means leaving the ninety and nine, we must do so to find him."

May our personal supplication in response to the prophet's entreaty be:

Help me reach a friend in darkness;  
Help me guide him through the  
night.

Help me show thy path to glory  
By the Spirit's holy light. . . .

Help me find thy lambs who wander;  
Help me bring them to thy keep.  
Teach me, Lord, to be a shepherd;  
Father, help me feed thy sheep.  
("Help Me Teach with Inspiration,"  
*Hymns*, no. 281)

That we may follow our prophet's plea, become converted, and then strengthen our brothers and sisters is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus, the Logan-Ogden combined Institute choirs, the Ricks College combined men's chorus, and the Tabernacle Choir, and to their conductors and their organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference. It has been a prayer unto the Lord.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Nothing to fear and everything to gain

This has been a wonderful conference. The Spirit of the Lord has been here. The music has been inspirational. The talks and prayers have touched us with a desire to do better. We have appreciated all who have spoken and wish that all of the General and Area Authorities and general officers might have been heard from. That would have taken about a week.

We have been reminded that ours is a great inheritance. The past is behind us. It is the future with which we must be concerned. We face great opportunities

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for their coverage of the conference. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

We shall now be pleased to hear from our beloved President of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who will be our concluding speaker.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Redeemer of Israel." And the benediction will be offered by Elder John E. Fowler of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned for six months.

and great challenges. Our critics at home and abroad are watching us. In an effort to find fault, they listen to every word we say, hoping to entrap us. We may stumble now and again. But the work will not be materially hindered. We will stand up where we fell and go forward.

We have nothing to fear and everything to gain. God is at the helm. We will seek His direction. We will listen to the still, small voice of revelation. And we will go forward as He directs.

His Church will not be misled. Never fear that. If there were any disposition on the part of its leaders to do so, He could

remove them. All of us are beholden to Him for life and voice and strength.

Let us be good citizens of the nations in which we live. Let us be good neighbors in our communities. Let us acknowledge the diversity of our society, recognizing the good in all people. We need not make any surrender of our theology. But we can set aside any element of suspicion, of provincialism, of parochialism.

### **The living reality of the Savior**

"We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost" (Articles of Faith 1:1). This is our primary declaration of faith. We speak unabashedly of the living reality of the Lord Jesus Christ. We declare without equivocation the fact of His great act of Atonement for all mankind. That act brought assurance of universal resurrection and opened the way to exaltation in our Father's kingdom.

This is the burden of our declaration to the world. It is the substance of our theology. It is the wellspring of our faith. Let no one ever say that we are not Christians.

To those who have been released during this conference, we express our deep gratitude for your past performance. You have done so very, very well. Thank you for your great contributions. To those of you newly sustained, we wish for you great satisfaction and happiness in the work which you will do. All of us at some time will be released by one process or another. It matters not where we serve in this great cause, but how we serve.

### **We each make a contribution**

Brigham Young and a handful of others are remembered from our pioneer history. But what of the unsung, the unheralded, the unrecognized who lived the gospel, loved the Lord, and did their daily work without fanfare or applause? Will their eternal reward be any less? I think not.

So it is with us. We each make our own contribution, and that contribution adds up to the building of the cause. Your contribution is as acceptable as ours. Jesus said, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all" (Mark 9:35).

Brethren and sisters, we're all part of one great family. Each has a duty; each has a mission to perform. And when we pass on, it will be reward enough if we can say to our beloved Master, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

May each of you go safely to your homes. May you live together in love and appreciation and respect one for another. May you know the smile of heaven upon your lives.

Our love reaches out to you. We love you very much. We leave our blessing with you. We do so as servants of the living God and in the name of our divine Redeemer. God be with you till we meet again, as we conclude this great and wonderful conference, is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Redeemer of Israel."  
Elder John E. Fowler offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Linda Margetts was the organist.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by the Logan-Ogden combined Institute choirs, conducted by Don Castleton. Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

At the general priesthood session a Ricks College combined men's choir provided the music. Kevin Brower and Steve Greason conducted the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Craig Jessop, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

**F. Michael Watson**  
Clerk of the Conference



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